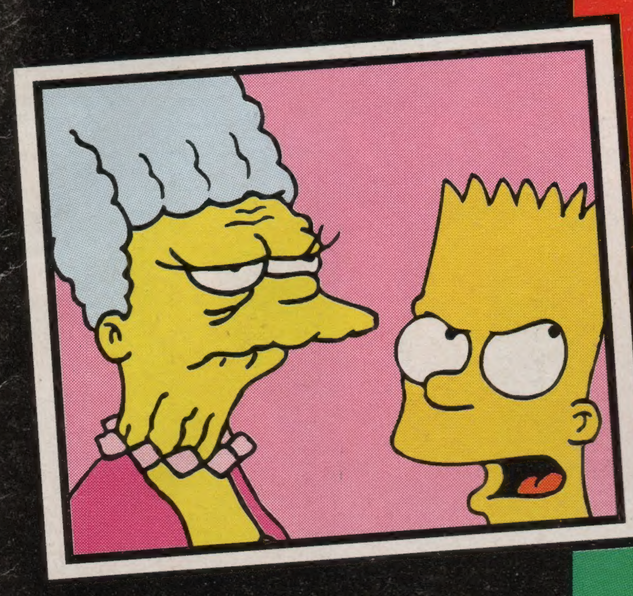

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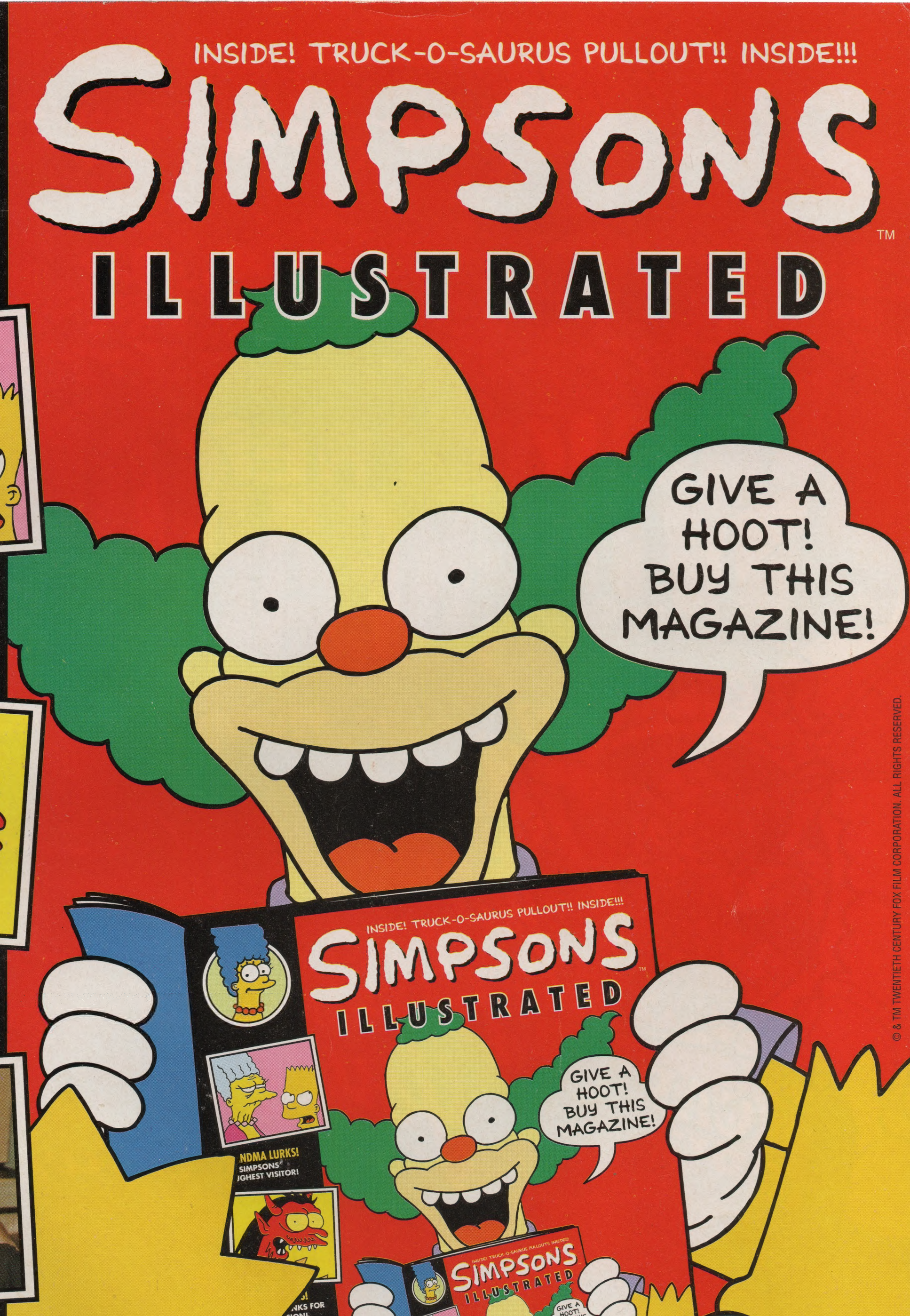
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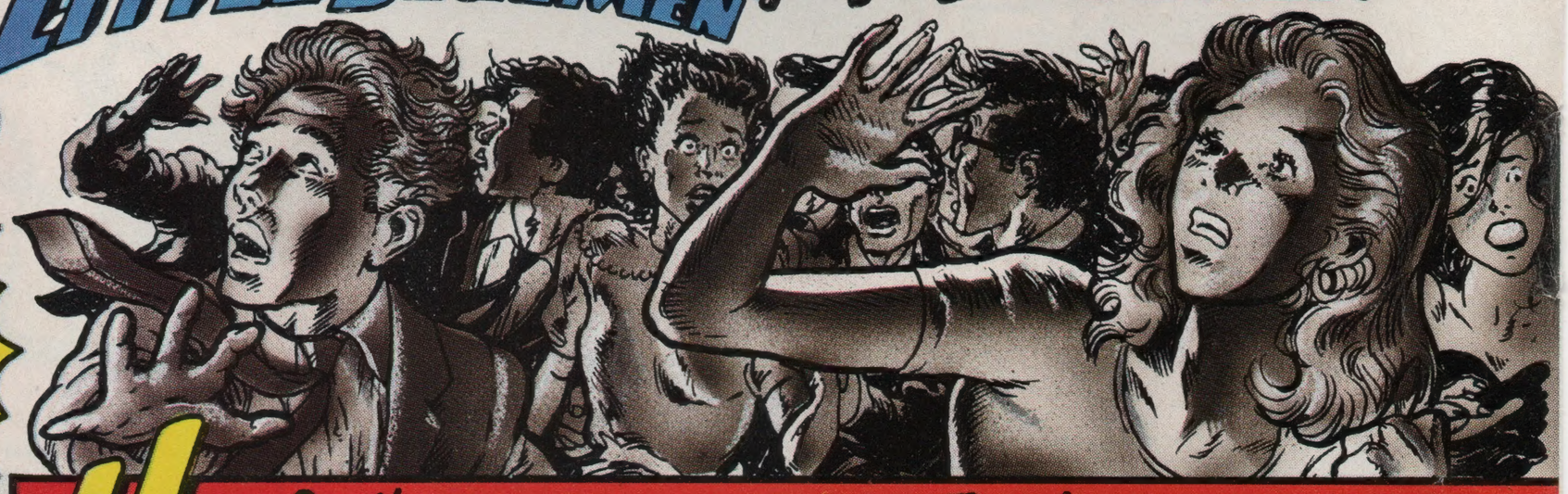

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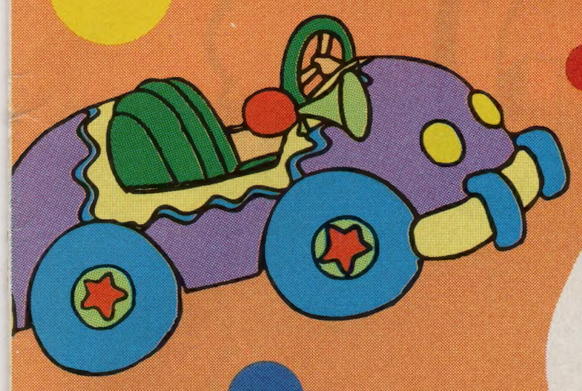

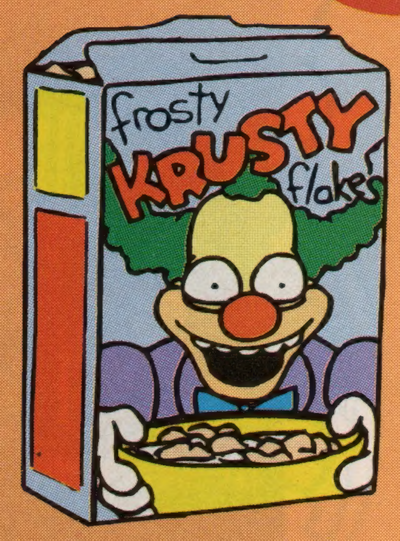

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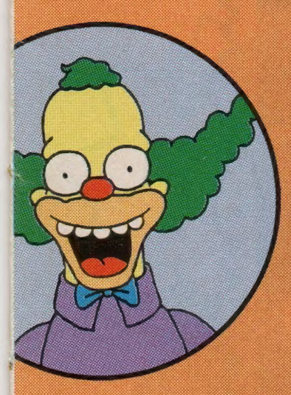

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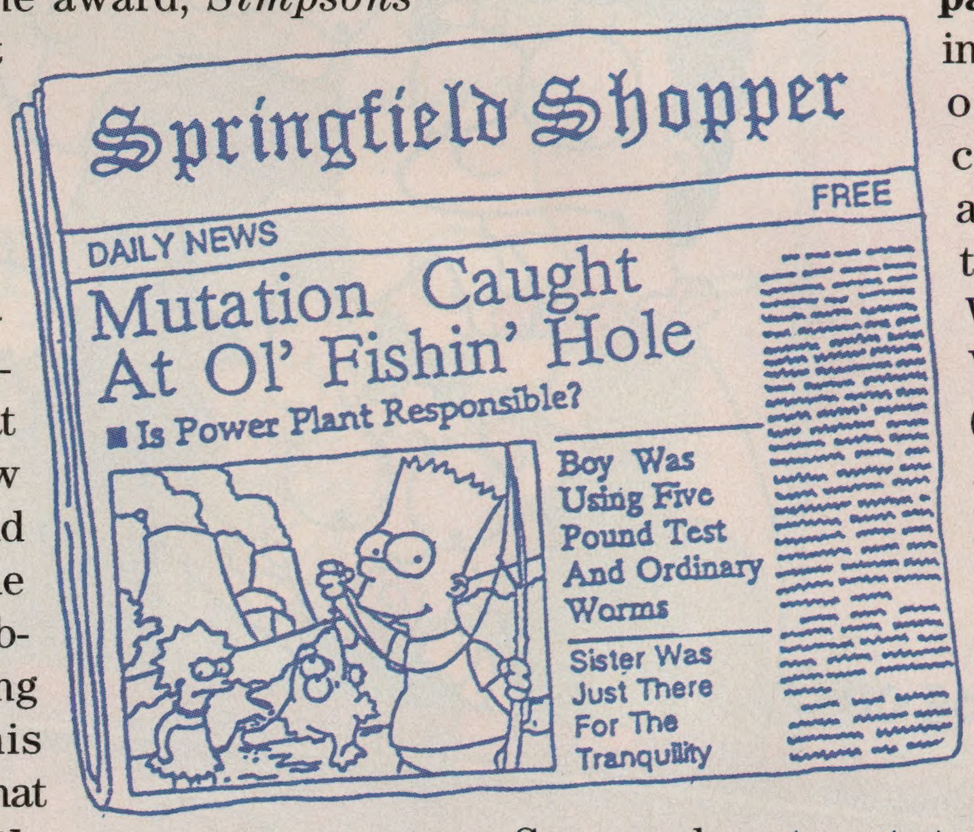
THE FRONT PAGE

In September, ***The Simpsons*** received an **Environmental Media Award** for "Two Cars in Every Garage, and Three Eyes on Every Fish," the episode that introduced Blinky, the **mutant fish** hooked in the warm waters near the **Springfield Nuclear Power Plant**. In accepting the award, *Simpsons* creator **Matt Groening** told of having received a letter from a nuclear-power lobbying group that said the show "confused and frightened the American public." Groening said that this "was a sign that we're **doing the right thing**" and promised that "we at *The Simpsons* will continue to confuse and frighten the American public"....


Springfield Shopper
FREE
DAILY NEWS
Mutation Caught At Ol' Fishin' Hole
■ Is Power Plant Responsible?
Boy Was Using Five Pound Test And Ordinary Worms
Sister Was Just There For The Tranquility

A bulletin from *The Simpsons* nursery: On September 27, **Nancy Cartwright**, the voice of **Bart**, gave **birth** to **Jackson Louis Murphy**. Jackson, the brother of Lucy Mae (born December 19, 1989), and the son of William Warren Murphy, weighed in at 8 pounds, 3 ounces....

Guest voices on ***The Simpsons*** late this season include: the world's greatest third-rate heavy-metal band **Spinal Tap** (Christopher Guest, Michael McKean, and series regular Harry Shearer)...**Beverly D'Angelo** playing country singer **Lurleen Lumpkin** (and warbling such songs as "Bagged Me a Homer," and "Stand By Your Manager")...and **Kimmy Robertson** (of ***Twin Peaks***) playing a certain ten-year-old boy's **first love**.

The Simpsons continues to inflict itself on the world with a wide variety of new products and premiums....In Australia, the real thing is **Bart's Clear Cola**, a colorless soft drink introduced in October by Cadbury-Schweppes....Also down under, Johnson and Johnson is using Simpsons artwork on its packaging to promote dental hygiene. In one illustration, Bart says, "**My mouth is a temple, man**!"....And into the mouth-temples of Australia and England goes **Simpsons-shaped dried pasta**, featuring the heads of various characters and manufactured by White Wings Vetta Pasta (Australia) and HP Foods (England)....If you visit one of England's Marks and Spencer department stores, you'll be able to take home a **cake** in the shape of **Bart's head**....That is, if you haven't satisfied your appetite with **Bart Bites**. In late November, Burton's Biscuits began offering the Simpsons head-shaped **cookies**.....Wait, there's more: Cereal Partners in the UK is offering, inside boxes of Shreddies, a special "Slogan-Slider." It's a device slightly larger than a credit card with an inner and outer section. You slide the outer card and look through an opening for trivia questions and **Simpsons** terminology. Turn to the other side of your Slogan-Slider and presto, there's your trivia answer or translation. On the outside of every Shreddies box is a **Simpsons "Wobbler" 3-D cut-out toy**, such as the one depicting **Bart** kicking a football....In early October, Spain's Chupa Chups began placing a **Simpsons "couch figurine**," i.e., a miniature family-on-the-couch collectible, in one of every seven of its Tombola **surprise chocolate eggs**. More than 20 million of the eggs were distributed throughout Germany, England, and Spain....

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IN THE NEWS

OUR MOTTO: "TRUTH IS WEIRDER THAN FICTION"

GONE FISSION

An episode of *The Simpsons* recently inspired a group of anti-nuclear activists in the upstate New York town of Cincinnatus to create an innovative piece of street theater.

Dressed as Bart, Lisa, Homer and Marge, members of Citizens Against Radioactive Dumping (CARD) presented the New York State Low-Level Radioactive Waste Siting Commission with a foam replica of Blinky, the three-eyed fish found in the warm waters near the Springfield Nuclear Power Plant.

Sherrie Massmann, a spokesperson for the 500-member CARD, told *Simpsons Illustrated*, "We thought Blinky was hilarious." So Massmann and her family spent several weekends carving foam heads of Simpsons characters and a foam replica of Blinky, then prepared their presentation for the Siting Commission hearing in nearby Taylor, New York.

During a lull in the proceedings, "The Simpsons" presented the Blinky replica to the commissioners, while a boom box blared the lyrics to a rap song their children had composed:

"We're a nuclear family,
Don't you know,
Average folks just in from Oswego.
And we've brought you a little prize,
And we're gonna present it before
your very eyes.
Fresh from the lake's hot fission waters,
A little catch from our sons and
daughters.
Three-eyed Blinky, the Mutant Fish,
A tempting morsel on a golden dish.
It's like your story—hard to swallow,
About the dump with its burial shallow.
So keep your money and keep your tale,
'Cause the town of Taylor is not for sale!"

Steve Jacobs/AP

CARD members serve up a mutated mouthful at nuke-site hearing.

What happened next? The chairman, according to a newspaper report of the event, "laughed and showed the youngsters pictures of his own children."

Said Massmann, "We think it had *some* effect."

LEAVE IT TO BART

Gee, Beav, you'd look better in a spiked haircut.

That's the conclusion drawn by some shrinks, sociologists, and TV critics who compared *The Simpsons* to the "sugar coated" American families portrayed in '50s programs such as *Leave it to Beaver* and *Father Knows Best.*

"Too many people compare their lives to TV and they are coming up short," complains one such expert, quoted in the July/August issue of *Changes*, a magazine for "adult children" of dysfunctional families. In a lengthy article on the subject, the '50s shows are criticized for fostering sexism, racism, and the tantalizing fantasy that all family problems are easily solvable in a half-hour.

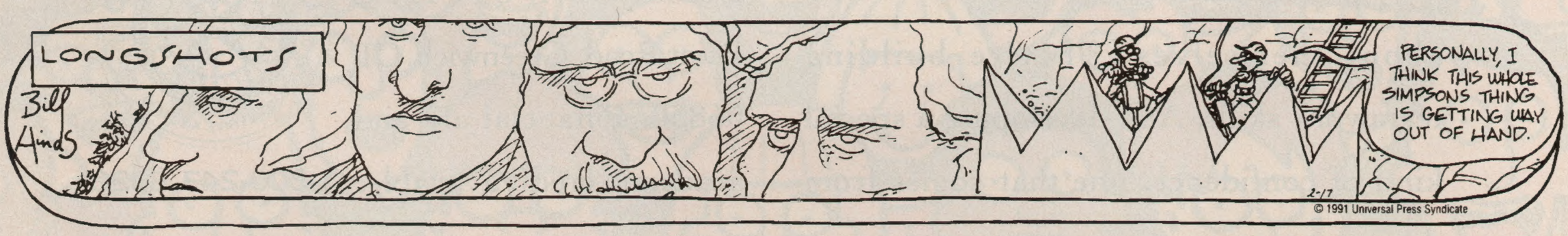
Much more therapeutic, the article says, is the "realistic" satire of modern shows.

The article praises *The Simpsons* for addressing "such issues as censorship, ecology, nuclear energy, extra-marital affairs, and family ther-

From the syndicated comic strip by Bill Hinds.

IN FLORIDA ARE FARTHER WEST THAN PARTS OF WISCONSIN

IN HOMER, GA, ONLY POLICE OFFICERS CAN LEGALLY CARRY SLINGSHOTS


LONGSHOTS
Bill Hinds
PERSONALLY, I THINK THIS WHOLE SIMPSONS THING IS GETTING WAY OUT OF HAND.
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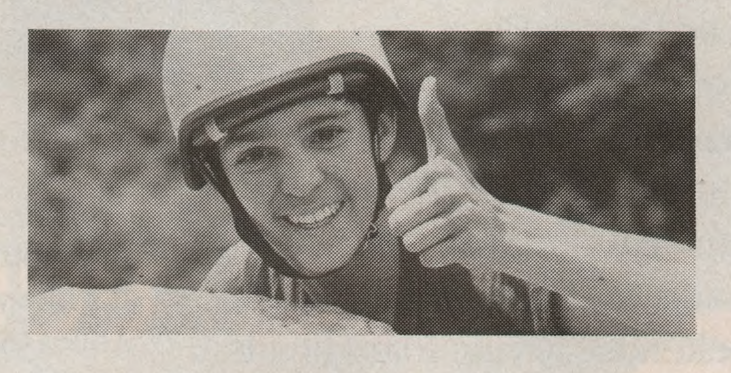

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apy—not to mention just plain petty greed, selfishness, hypocrisy, and dishonesty."

Another commentator is quoted as saying, "Let's face it. The Simpsons don't fit in with Hollywood's sugar-coated families. But that's OK. They are what the American family is all about."

EMMY OF THE PEOPLE?

This summer, for the second year in a row, *The Simpsons* was kept out of the running for a Best Comedy Emmy Award.

The Television Academy of Arts and Sciences once again decided that *The Simpsons* didn't belong in the same category as, say, *Cheers* or *The Golden Girls*.

Instead, the prime-time series was relegated to trouncing Garfield the Cat and various Tiny Toons for the Best Animated Program Emmy—and receiving its trophy during the non-televised "technical" portion of the proceedings.

"How could the nominating committee overlook *The Simpsons* as one of the top situation comedies of the year by unilaterally defining it as 'a cartoon'?" lamented Jerry Krupnick, TV critic for the *Newark Star-Ledger*.

James L. Brooks, the show's executive producer, said, "All we ask is that the Simpsons be treated like human beings."

However, *Simpsons* creator Matt Groening was less perturbed: "There is a certain guilty satisfaction in stomping *The Smurfs*."

BAD TO THE BONE

Dr. Timothy P. Close of Richland Memorial Hospital in Columbia, South Carolina, saw right through the problem. When a 35-year-old male patient, otherwise in good health and high spirits, complained of an annoying, prickly sensation above his kneecap, the good doc ordered an x-ray. He stared at the picture a little while. Then he sent it to the medical journal *Radiology*. In its April Fool's Day edition, the magazine reported the following discovery:

"The first known case of Bart Simpson of the femur."

Peter Schumacher/AP/Wide World Photos

What do *you* see in this picture?

UNRELATED SIMPSONS IN THE NEWS

The following sound like plot twists from upcoming episodes, but they're not:

• Last May, the *New York Times* reported that Joyce Simpson of Stone Mountain, Georgia, drove into a service station in Atlanta, parked beneath a billboard advertising spaghetti dinners at Pizza Hut, and had a religious experience.

Said Simpson: "The Holy Spirit...simply said, 'Look up.' When I looked up, I lost my breath.... I saw the Michelangelo version of Christ. I saw the crown of thorns. I saw the deep-set eyes. I saw the nose. The mustache. I saw just the total vision of Christ."

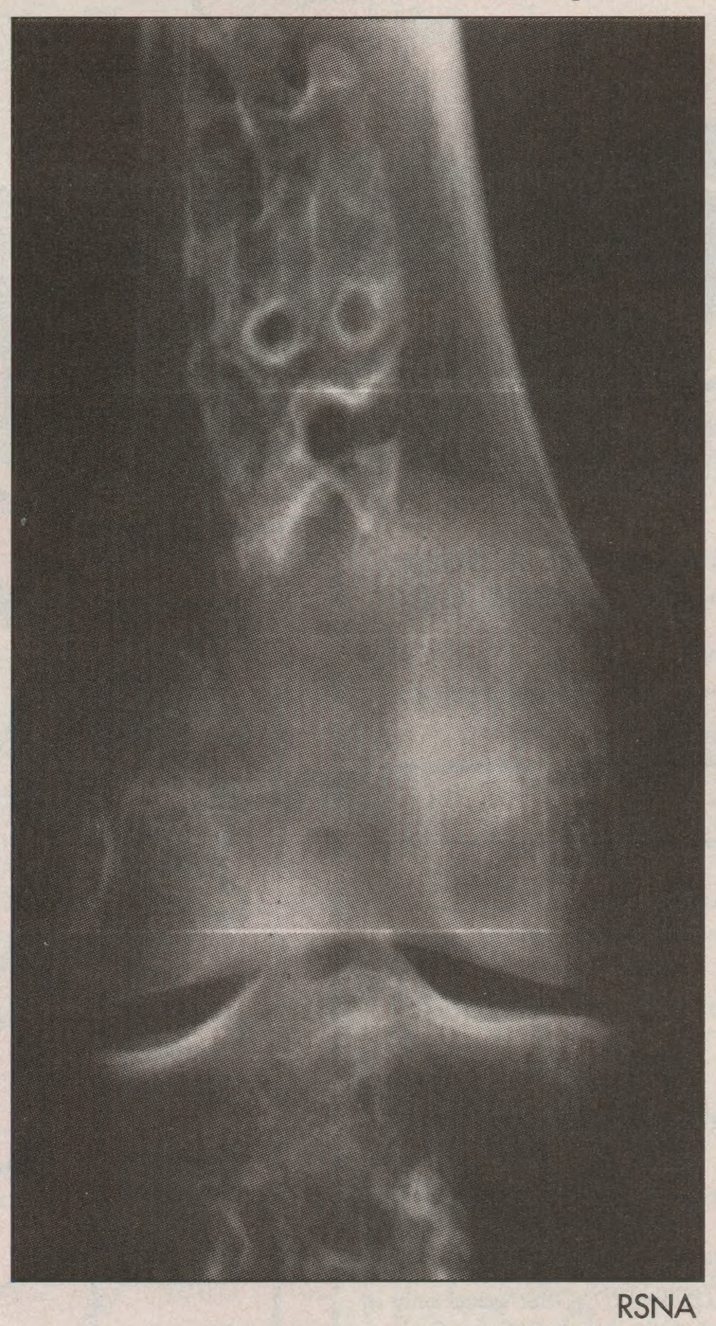
• On the environmental front, the Simpson Paper Company of Eureka, California, agreed to spend $50 million to reduce the flow of chemical pollution from its paper mill into the Pacific Ocean.

Responding to a lawsuit filed by the Surfrider Foundation of San Mateo, California—which represents surfers throughout the country—Simpson Paper promised to install expensive equipment to treat its waste water. The company also promised to install solar-heated showers at nearby beaches, so that surfers could wash off the pollutants.

• In August, the Associated Press reported that at one point last year, the Donald Simpson family (the only Simpsons in the Oswego, New York, phone book) was receiving 20 to 30 prank calls a day.

"The phone calls never stop," Carol Simpson said. "You pick up the phone and it's, 'Hi, Marge. This is Homer. I'll be home soon.' It's round the clock."

Bart of the femur: What a pain.



RSNA

ANGORA WOOL COMES FROM RABBITS ☆ SHARKS ARE OLDER THAN DINOSAURS ☆ A CHAMELEON'S TONGUE IS HOLLOW ☆ FROGS HAVE TEETH; TOADS DON'T ☆ YELLOW BLOOD ☆ MEXICAN BEAN BEETLES HAVE YELLOW BLOOD ☆ IN SPACE WATER BOILS INSTANTLY ☆ WOMEN HAVE A BETTER SENSE OF TASTE AND SMELL THAN MEN DO ☆ SLEEPWALKING IS HEREDITARY

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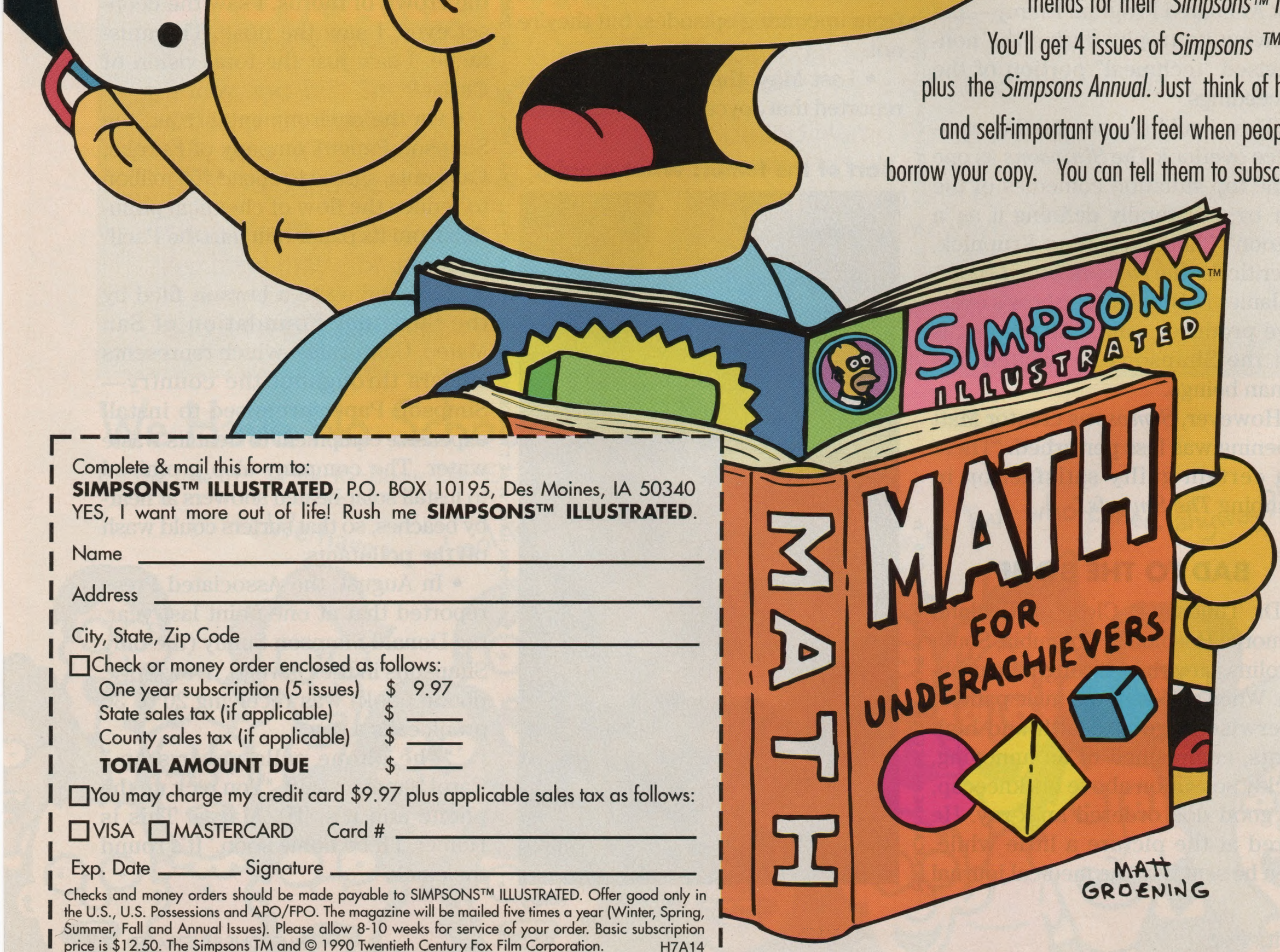

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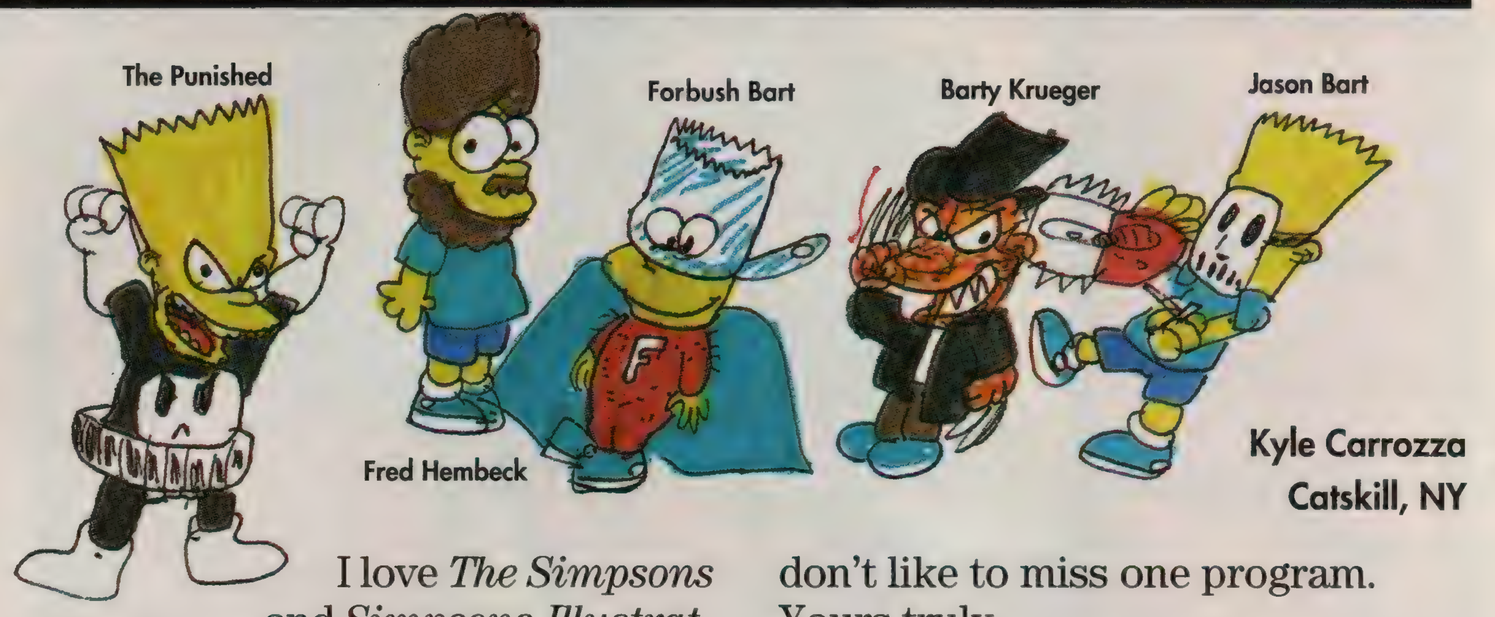


Kyle Carrozza
Catskill, NY

Kathy Laninovich
Santa Ana, CA

THE PLAIN TRUTH

Dear Mr. Groening,

It's nice to watch a show that centers around a family, but isn't so sissylike. Ever since I could watch TV and realize what was going on, I always wondered why my life seemed so far removed from the family's life portrayed on TV. I got tired of watching the neverending saga of the perfect home, the perfect marriage, the perfect job (with the perfect boss and perfect coworkers attached), and the perfect children. Where everyone lives in a state of ignorant bliss and any and all problems are solved thoroughly and completely by the end of 30 minutes. (Not all of them are like this, but most are.)

I love *The Simpsons* and *Simpsons Illustrated* magazine for many reasons, but the biggest one is because they depict a normal American family as it really is with no curtains blanketing the scene. Also, watching or reading something that will make you laugh at life's many little problems (so you can see that maybe every little annoyance in your own life is not that earth-shaking) is a lot better than watching a "the perfect life" sitcom and pretending that your worries and problems are nonexistent. You (and the other people that make *The Simpsons* possible) have caused me much release of tension and stress and many "squirt Coke out of your nose" laughs. Thank you and keep up the good work.

—Barbara A. Schulte
Owingsville, KY

P.S. In the summer issue of *Simpsons Illustrated* I especially liked the "Springfield Nuclear Power Plant" pamphlet. I laughed until it hurt.

WORKING WOMAN

Dear Editor,

Enclosed is a picture of myself last Halloween dressed as Marge. Needless to say, I WON FIRST PRIZE at work. I am an Escrow Officer for Chicago Title in Santa Ana, CA. Marge did a great job working on my escrow files, and the customers loved her.

I did not watch *The Simpsons* show on television until I started planning my costume. Now I don't like to miss one program.

Yours truly,

—Kathy Laninovich
Also known as Marge Simpson
Santa Ana, CA

P.S. The hair is made of cotton balls that I dyed blue.

DANKE!

Dear Editor!

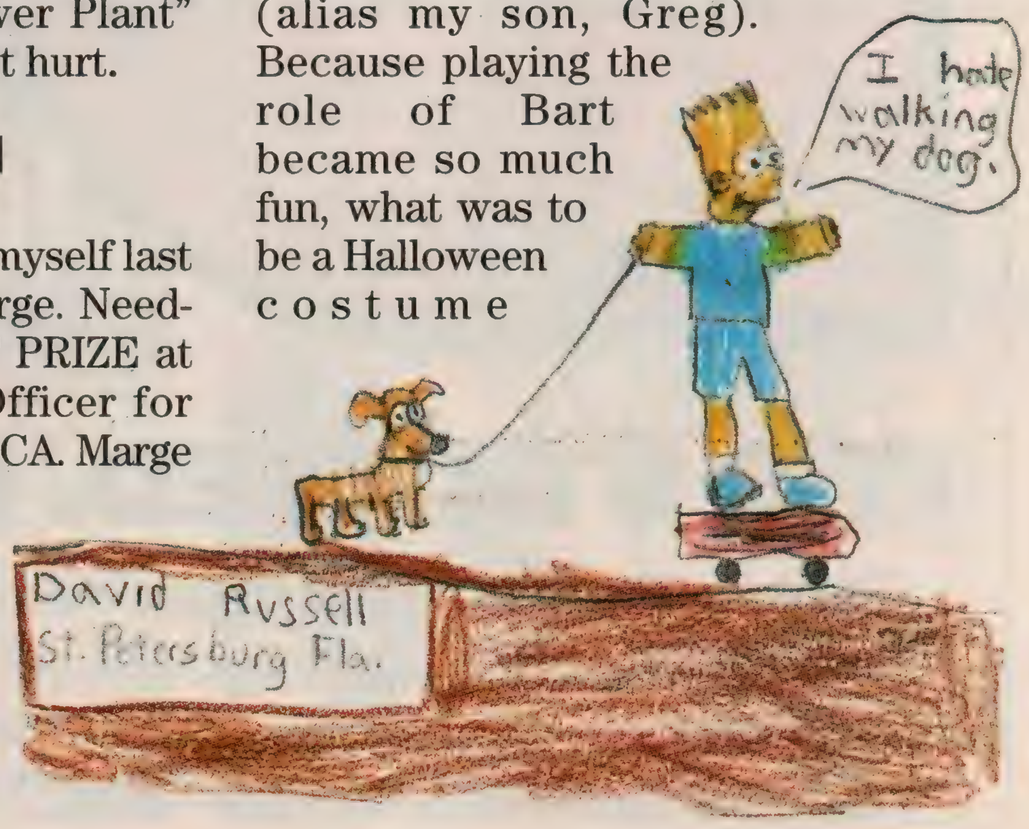
I am a fan of *The Simpsons*. But I live in Germany and here *The Simpsons* are not very popular. Yesterday I found and bought the summer issue of your magazine in a comic shop. It's really fantastic, but I think there are not enough comic strips about the Simpsons.

—Philipp Komossa
Dusseldorf, Germany

A SERIOUS CASE

Dear Editor,

Enclosed please find a few snapshots of a day in the life of Bart (alias my son, Greg). Because playing the role of Bart became so much fun, what was to be a Halloween costume



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Watch him smirk in the face of danger as he blazes his way through hilly pastures, underwater caverns, marble ruins, strange cities and a cybernetic world of enemies in a race to save his buddies.

Sonic's got everything a hedgehog could ever want: tricks, gadgets and speed. Lots of speed. And he's not

™ IS OUT. AND NO ONE CAN STOP HIM.

afraid to use it. Just try to keep up as he gives the bad guys the run-around with his infamous ultra-sonic spin attack. There's never been anything like it.

So don't blink or you just might miss Sonic The Hedgehog. He's fresh, he's on Genesis, and he's here. Well uh, at least he *was* here.

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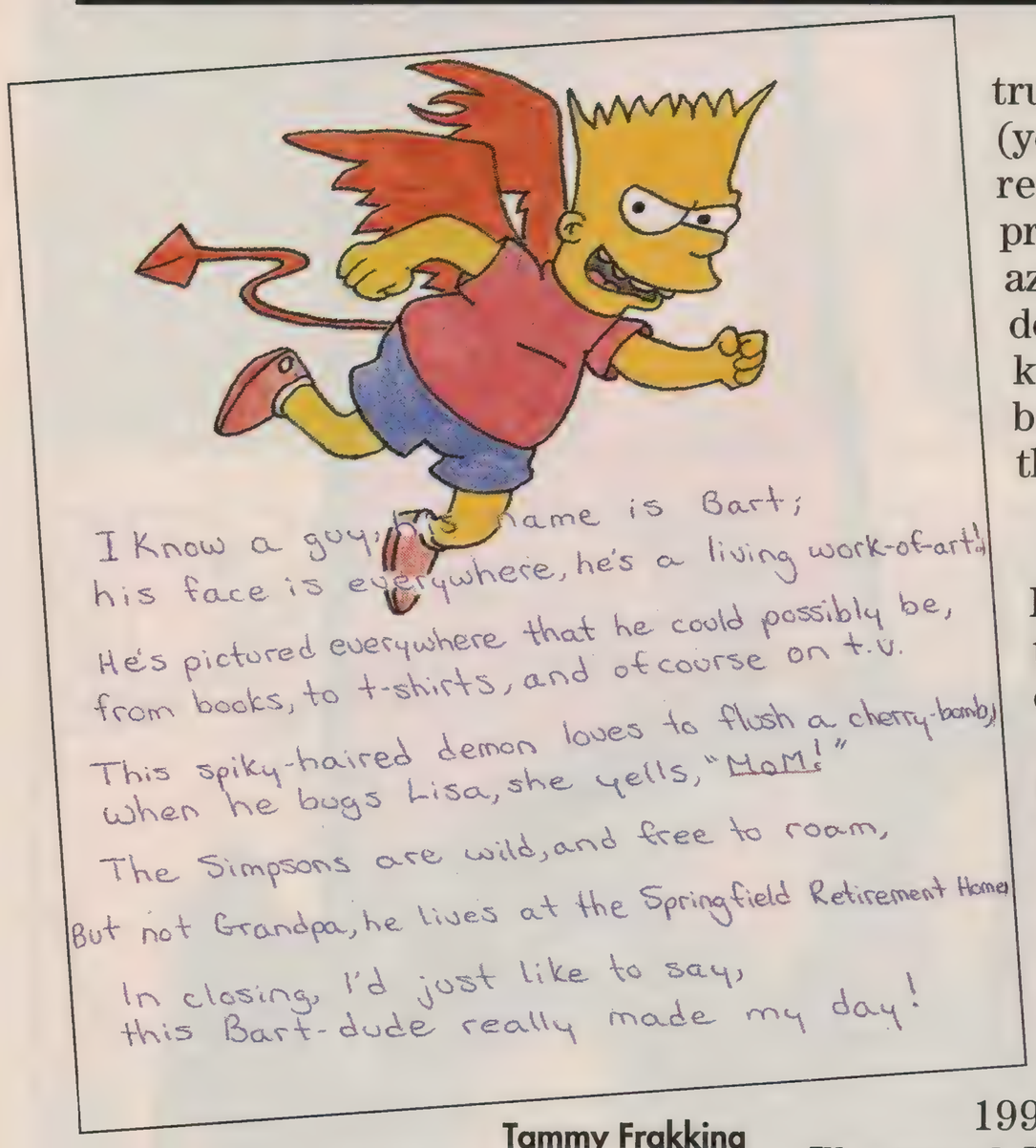
SEGA™ GENESIS™

JUNK MAIL


I Know a guy, his name is Bart;
his face is everywhere, he's a living work-of-art!
He's pictured everywhere that he could possibly be,
from books, to t-shirts, and of course on t.v.
This spiky-haired demon loves to flush a cherry-bomb,
when he bugs Lisa, she yells, "MoM!"
The Simpsons are wild, and free to roam,
But not Grandpa, he lives at the Springfield Retirement Home
In closing, I'd just like to say,
this Bart-dude really made my day!

Tammy Frakking
Niagara Falls, ONT, Canada

became a whole lot of "Bart Time."

I have enjoyed tremendously the premiere issue of *Simpsons Illustrated.* Good luck with a great magazine.

—Jean Weiss
Marathon, NY

FRIENDLY USER

Dear Editor,

I don't care what *USA Today* or *Harvard Business Review* ("Simpsons in the News," *Simpsons Illustrated,* summer 1991) say about the "School Handbook" in the back of every issue. My mom knows that there is one in every issue and she trusts that I won't use it (yeah, right). Those dumb reporters have no right printing that. It's your magazine, not theirs. You can do what you want. Please keep the "School Handbooks" in. I enjoy reading them.

—Keri Carlsen
Chesapeake, VA

P.S. It's not your fault that kids are scoring low on academic tests!

PICKY, PICKY

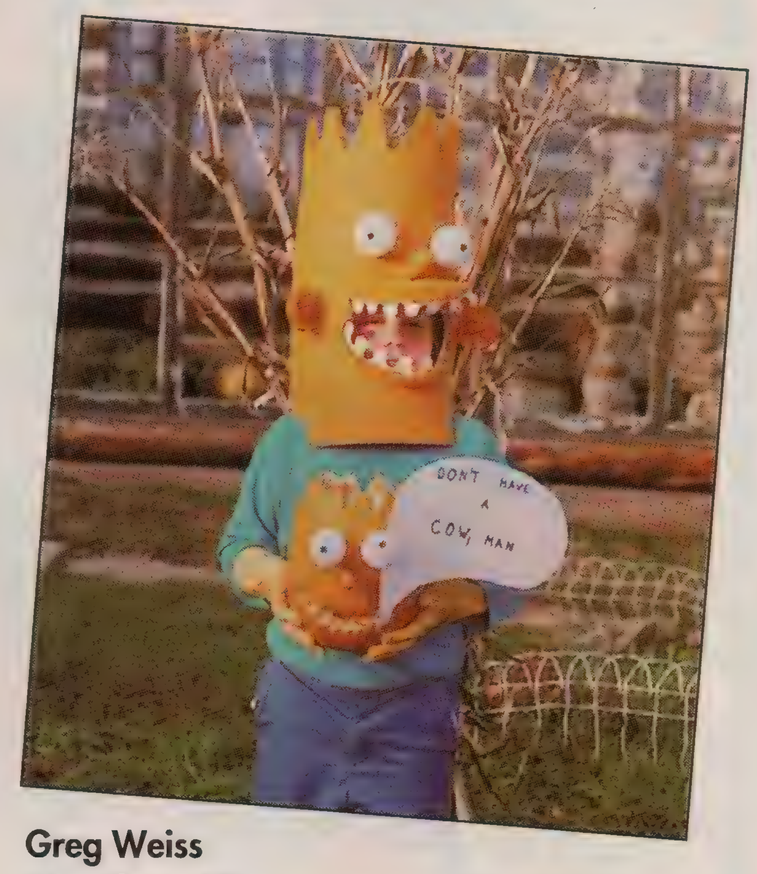
Dear Editor,

I noticed a few additional "mutations" not mentioned in your "Mutation Observation" game in the summer 1991 issue of *Simpsons Illustrated.* First, although Homer is cooking tofu pancakes on the stovetop and heat is rising from the pan, there is no burner visible under the edge of the frying pan. Second, there are *three* toast slots on the toaster (all the toasters I have seen have either two or four, but perhaps I have just led a sheltered life). Third, Lisa is not holding an authentic Krusty Flakes box. Krusty is facing straight ahead on her box, instead of facing 45 degrees off-center in a semi-profile (as he does on the box in the cereal advertisement from the spring 1991 issue). Finally, the answer key states that Maggie has *six* fingers on one of her hands, yet all three arms look the same with *four* fingers apiece (the same number of fingers as each of the other Simpsons).

—Timothy J. Kocourek
New Orleans, LA

Dear Editor,

I noticed in the *Simpsons Illustrated* summer of 1991 issue on page 35 in the "Mutation Observation" piece that there are five listed items that are impossible for any reader to know.



Greg Weiss
Marathon, NY

—[Homer is] thinking of work.
—[Homer is] eating a cherry donut. (How do we know what kind it is?)
—Not one of Maggie's three hands has six fingers, they all have four.
—The milk in the fridge is two days outdated.
—Patty and Selma are dancing naked in the living room.

Either you are very forgetful and forgot to prove your "facts," or you are

John Taylor, Newburgh, NY

very bad jokesters.

Besides the above, I [love] this magazine. I wait by the mail for this magazine to come.

—Robyn Greenberg
South San Francisco, CA

We were saving those for a "What's Wrong With This Answer" page in an upcoming issue, but you beat us to it.

WE UNDERSTAND

Dear Ed.,

I just subscribed to your mag and I'm thinking of canceling any further issues. The reason? Too much bull and too little comic-book-style cartoons.

If I want a marketing extravaganza I'll read the Penney's catalogue (or watch MTV).

—Pam Willhite
Detroit, MI

P.S. I bet you don't print this because it's too negative. But I *am* a Simpsons fan.

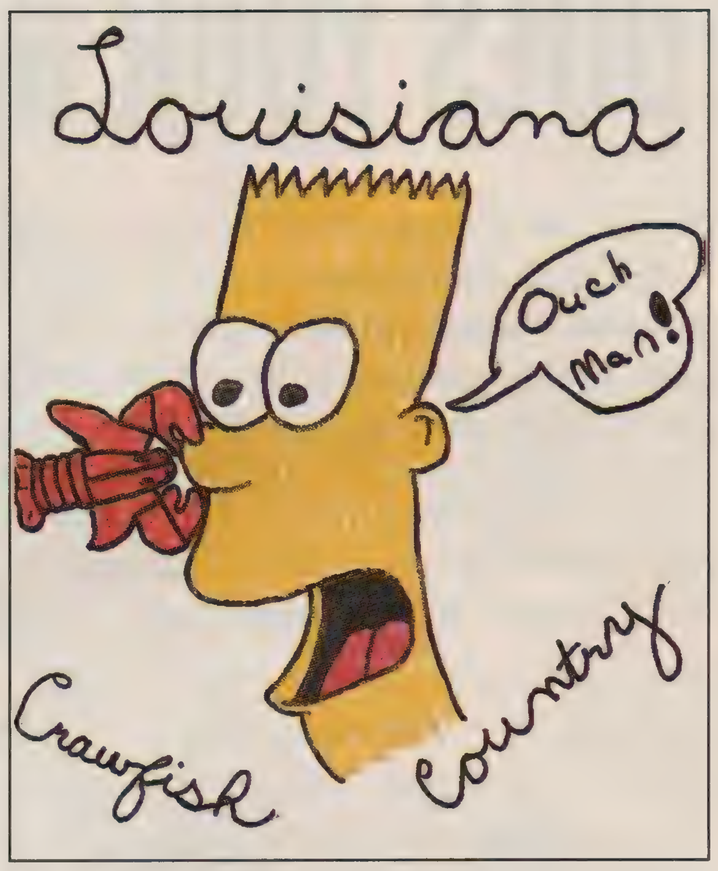
More cartoons are in the works, Pam. Check out future issues.

David Mills
Brooksville, FL

DANKE II

Editor,

While enjoying your summer 1991 periodical, I could not help but wonder to myself what the English translation of "Kindertotenlieder" (the last



Amy Magee
Winnsboro, LA

name of the director, musician, producer, script writer and star of "Space Mutants VII") is, so I asked my brother, who took two years of German in high school, for its meaning.

Brace yourselves—he told me that "Kindertotenlieder" means "song for dead children."

—Debra Jean Hopkins
Vista, CA

DON'T GO CHANGIN'

The Simpsons
First there is Homer
Simpson
A drone from Sector 7G
Or so the boss' assistant
calls him
Over the intercom, quite
officially.
After work Homer grabs
a Duff
At the place he loves,
Moe's Bar,
And doesn't understand
why Flanders
Gets to drive that real big car.
Then we come to the sweet woman
Marge
With the Xmas jar in her hair
Hiding the money from the
not-so-smart Homer
Because he wouldn't think to look
there.
But don't forget the eldest child
Bartholomew J., the dude
"Eat my shorts," is his main remark
Obviously, self-taught to be rude.
Then there's Lisa with her saxophone
Striking every chord of the blues.
She also happens to be a second-
grade Einstein
On intelligence, she'll never lose.
Then there's Maggie and her pacifier
Oh, there's really not much to say
Maggie is lovable, sweet, and
expressive
Just by saying "Suck, suck" everyday.
They are the one and only Simpsons
Family of the strange
Sometimes weird and sometimes
lonely
But we'd never want them to change.

—Althea White
Mechanicsville, VA

James Cosgrove
Havelock, ONT, Canada

Jay S. Bara

Jennifer Merklinger

Angela DiMarco

Joey Valle

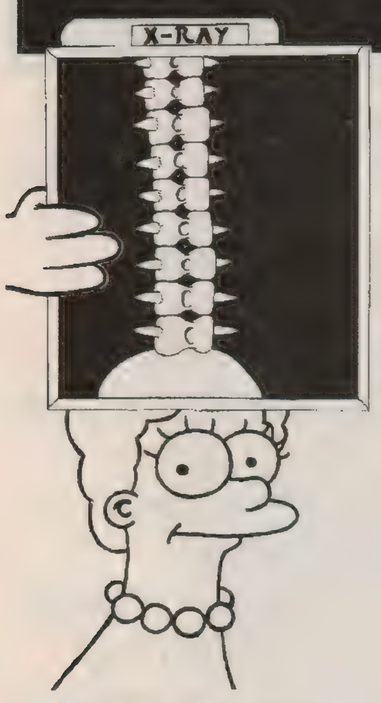
Michelle Cohen

T.A. Petrossie

Mike Labocki

WHO DOES YOUR HAIR?!

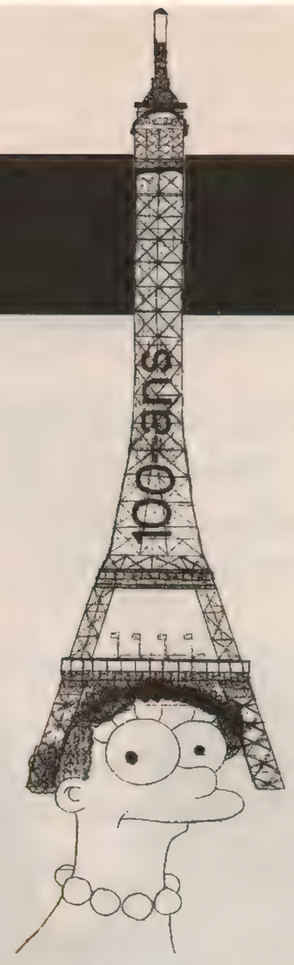
Kudos, oh readers. You've done it again (and again, and again). We're still digging ourselves out from under a pile of do's. Buildings topple from o'er Marge's placid brow and bees zoom through her blue-rinsed tresses. And despite your artistic onslaughts, the lady has kept her cool. May we present...Marge, in all her chameleonic glory.



Nicolas Laberge

Mike Iverson

Rebecca Hodge



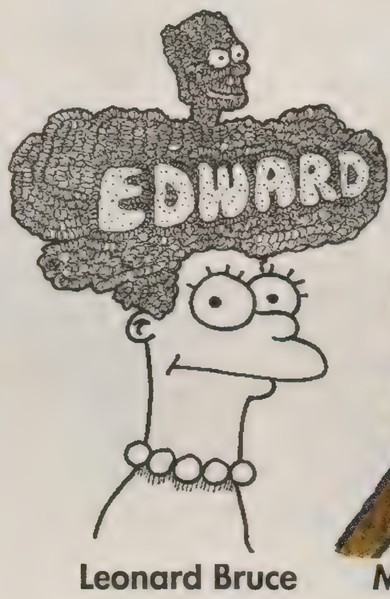
Laurie Hooley

Aaron Crider

Chris Weeden

Marotto

Lisa Waggoner

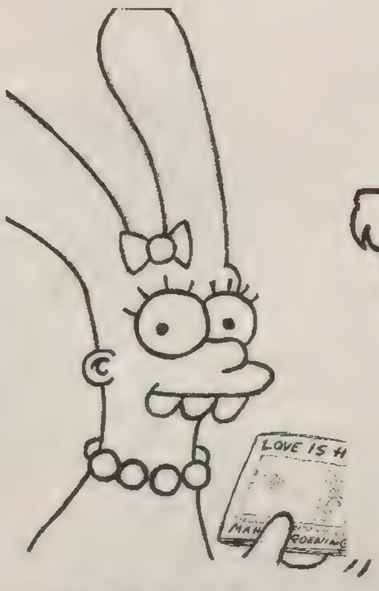


Leonard Bruce

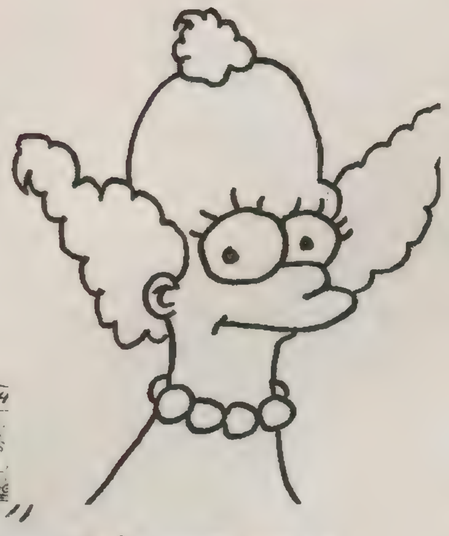
Margot Hammett

Ian Reynolds

Don Schreer



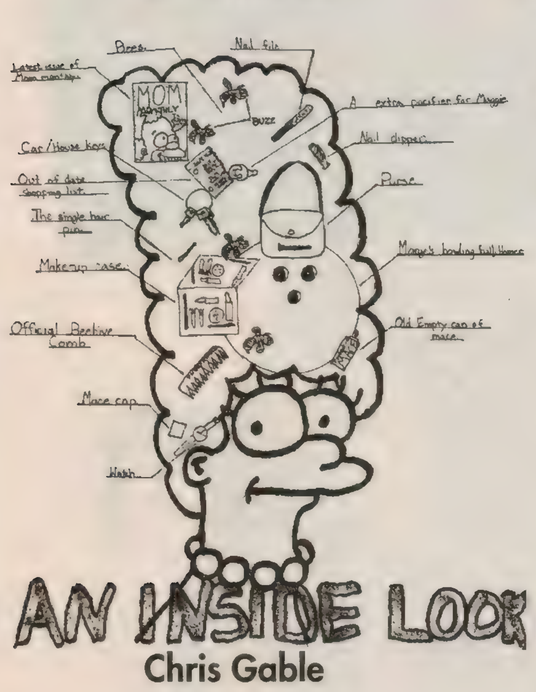
Michelle Wirth



Sabrina Brinegar

Lisa Wagner

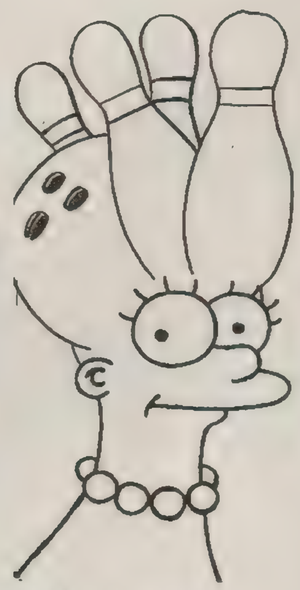
Richard S. Carver



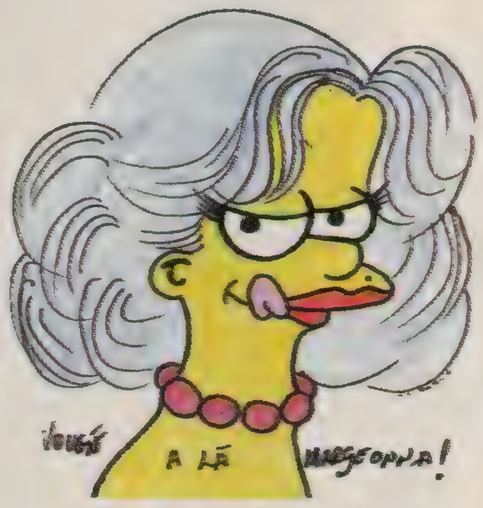
Chris Gable

Jesse Calm

Tina Martin & Sheena Martin

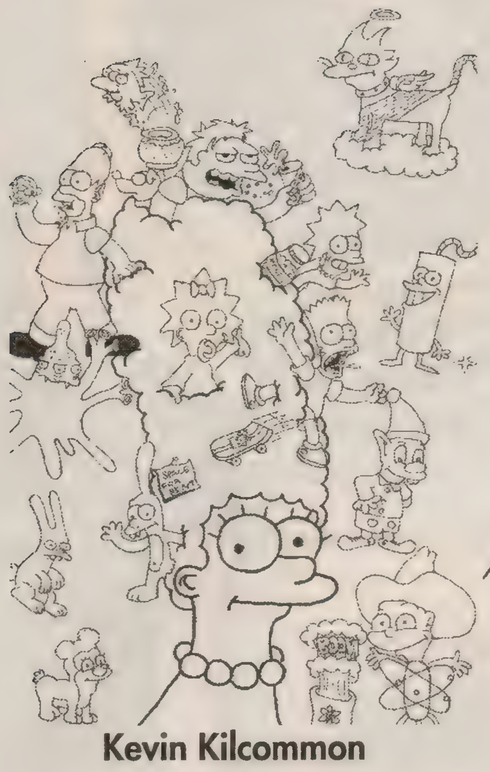


Mike Iverson



S.A. Jacob

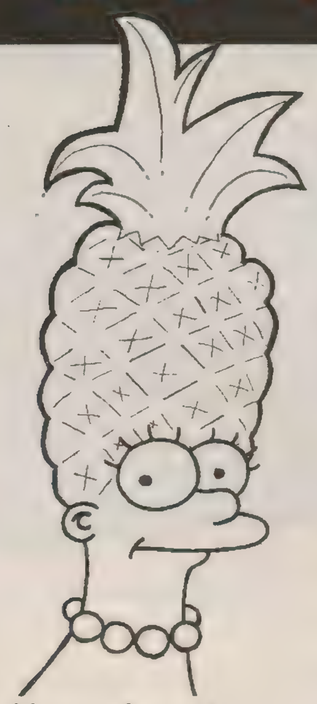
JUNK MAIL



Kevin Kilcommon

Nick Lasar

Shane Cullum

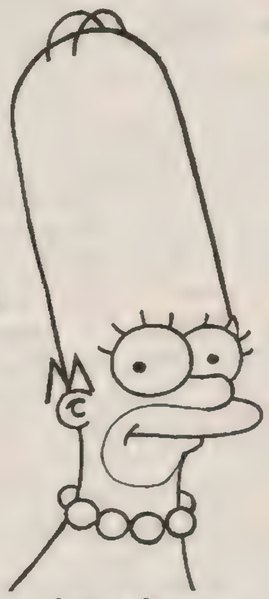


Marco Amyot

T.J. LeGrow

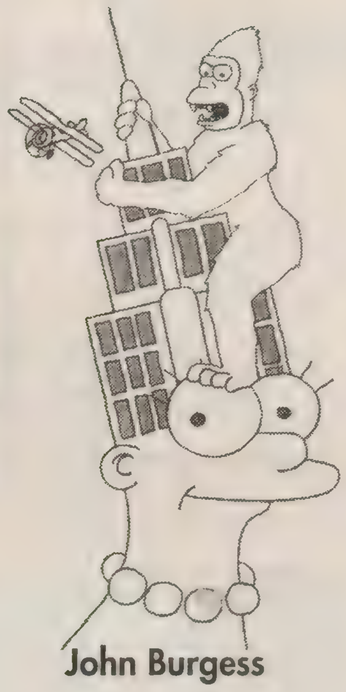
Cale Koester

Kennett Cook



Nicolas Laberge

Brenna Thomas

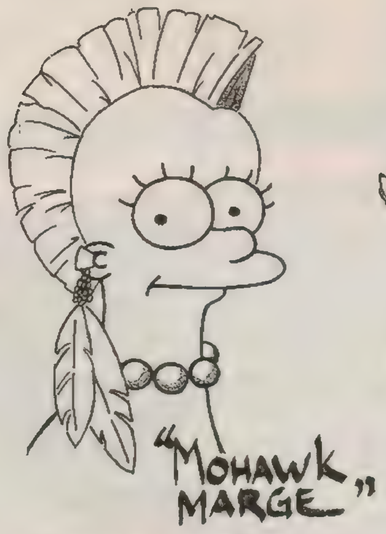


John Burgess

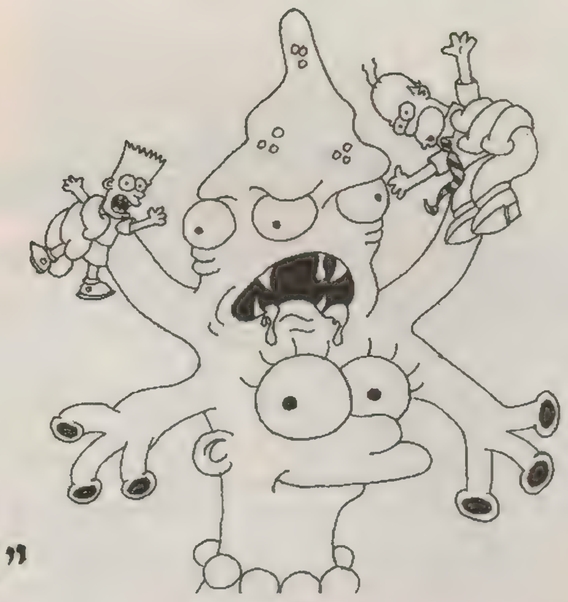
Bryan Kwong

Anne Schafer

Blase DiStefano



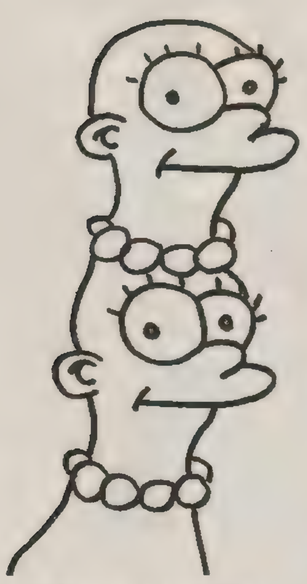
Yvonne Mandich



Jordan Boyd

Marshall Horn

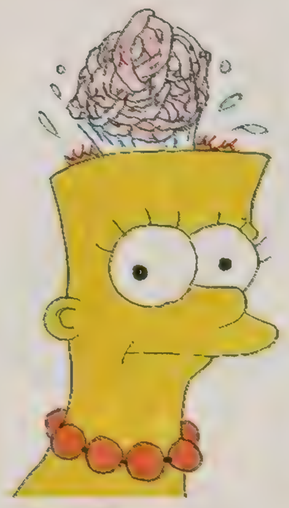
Matt Claypool



Bethany Hamett

Travis Ryan

BH



Ben Rivers

Aimee Cross

David Spencer

TO BE SHOWN TO SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST

TO BE RETURNED

TO BE GRADED

"What it Means to B

Being an Am
different thing
It means
your house, a
and to play
It means
legally when
It means
a teacher, and
manager, a pres
When I saw the
Marvelino he m
red, white, and b
us, that being an
alot to him, bec
a country where h
make a bird turn
blue scarves.
I think the best part of being an American is that we have more T.V. channels than any other

I'D RATHER BE ANYWHERE ELSE

BART - see me!

"WHAT IT MEANS TO BE AN AMERICAN"

by Bartholomew J. Simpson

I do not know what it means to be an American because I am from Mars. On Mars we don't have any houses or teachers. All you do on Mars is ride around in Space Bubbles like in Radioactive Man comics. You never have to go home on Mars because your space bubble is like your house. Its got a TV and a big refridgerator which makes whatever food you feel like eating. The other thing about space bubbles which isn't in the comic books is that you can do tricks like flipping it upside down or on it's side while your flying it at a gazillion miles an hour. Also, there is no school on Mars. That is what I think it means to be an American.

GREAT JOB
Nice Try!
SHAME ON YOU!
BAD
VERY BAD
VERY VERY BAD
FUTURE DITCH DIGGER
Give UP

TRIPLE-STRENGTH ASPIRIN
VALU-PAK!
Big Red
99% NON-DUST-FREE!
CHALK
Daisy BREATH DEODORANT minty lime
MR. STAPLER
CLEER-N-BRITE

MATH GROUNDING

MS. KRABAPPEL'S DESK

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SPRINGFIELD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

FROM: Principal Skinner
TO: All faculty members, cafeteria workers, media aides, and groundskeeper Willie
RE: Vandalism

It has come to my attention that the back wall of the schoolyard has, again, been wantonly defaced in the act of vandalism. I am referring to the crude spraypainted caricature of myself accompanied by a word balloon that says "I am still a weiner." I am trying to obtain any information leading to possible suspects, please report to my head office immediately.

Sincerely,

Principal Skinner

Mr. Stapler

WORLD'S GREATEST TEACHER

TODAY!

- ☐ - grade papers
- ☑ - requisition another goldfish
- ☐ - meet w/ Mrs. Simpson @ 3pm (bring evidence)
- ☐ - pick up paycheck, deposit immediately
- ☐ - buy more red pencils
- ☐ - PTA meeting
- ☐ - compile list of things to do tomorrow

SPRI... ELEM... SCHO...

POSSIBLE PLAYS FOR THIS TERM

* THE FIVE FUNNY FOOD GROUPS
by Peter Smith

THE BOY (OR GIRL) WHO HAD TO WEAR GLASSES (BUT DIDN'T WANT TO!)
by Francis Morris Jr.

* WHEELS
by Wiley and Doris Jones

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK
by the Brothers Grimm

WHERE IS THE SUN?: FOLKTALES OF FINLAND
by Edvard Jensen

(* indicates a musical)

Here! Now it's your problem!

Edna,
Here's the list of plays we are considering. Let me know what you think before the P.T.A. meeting.
Alice

5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

AIR SI... MPSON

MELTDOWN TO ADVENTURE

RADIOACTIVE MAN

BUBBLE GUM! 6 MILLION MILES OF FUN

SQUIRT MASTER

X-TRA STICKY

TCHMY & SCRATCHY FIRECRACKERS!!!

CHEESE SHEET
Columbus's 1492
Plimouth Rock 1620 AD
George Washington - First president

DUFF BEER and *NEW* DUFF DRY present

SATURDAY!

AT THE SPRINGFIELD SPEEDWAY!

MONSTER TRUCK RALLY

SEE!

Dan Wiliatrowski's **ARMAGEDDONMOBILE** The World's Only Nuclear Powered VW Scirocco!

As seen in CARnage Magazine!

Nitro-Burning, Eyebrow-Singeing **FUNNY CARS** Driven by

SEE!

John "The Crusher" Woodard and the Team Tomomatsu Dirt-Riding Dunk Masters!

TOR PULL

Living

Driven by
Chimp Genius
MR. TEENY
(of "Krusty the Clown Show" fame)

TRACTOR
Featuring The World's Only
Tractor-Pull Dodging Clown
CLOWN-O JR.
Son of the late great
Clown-O Sr.

MATT GROENING

THE AMAZING, THE APPALLING, THE APOCALYPTIC
TRUCK-O-SAURUS

20 TONS AND 4 STORIES OF CAR-CRUSHING, FIRE-BREATHING INSANITY!

AMATEUR DEMOLITION DERBY
in the parking lot immediately following the show!

DON'T MISS IT!

OUT OF TRACTION AND BACK IN ACTION!!!
Danger-loving, Death-defying Daredevil
CAPT. LANCE MURDOCK
SEE HIS 200-FOOT JUMP OVER A PIT OF CROCODILES AND INTO THE BACK OF A WAITING AMBULANCE!!!

DON'T MISS IT!

ADMISSION
ADULTS: $15.00
CHILDREN UNDER 10: $14.50
Persons weighing over 300 lbs. must buy two tickets

SATURDAY!

IF YOU HAVE HEART TROUBLE, WEAK STOMACH, OR REFINED SENSIBILITIES: Sorry, no refunds. Management assumes no responsibility for any damage or injury sustained at this event, including, but not limited to: loss of hearing, loss of sight, loss of appetite, loss of hair, damage caused by escaping wild animals, explosions, flying shards of white-hot metal debris, collapsing bleachers, or stampeding hordes of terrified spectators.

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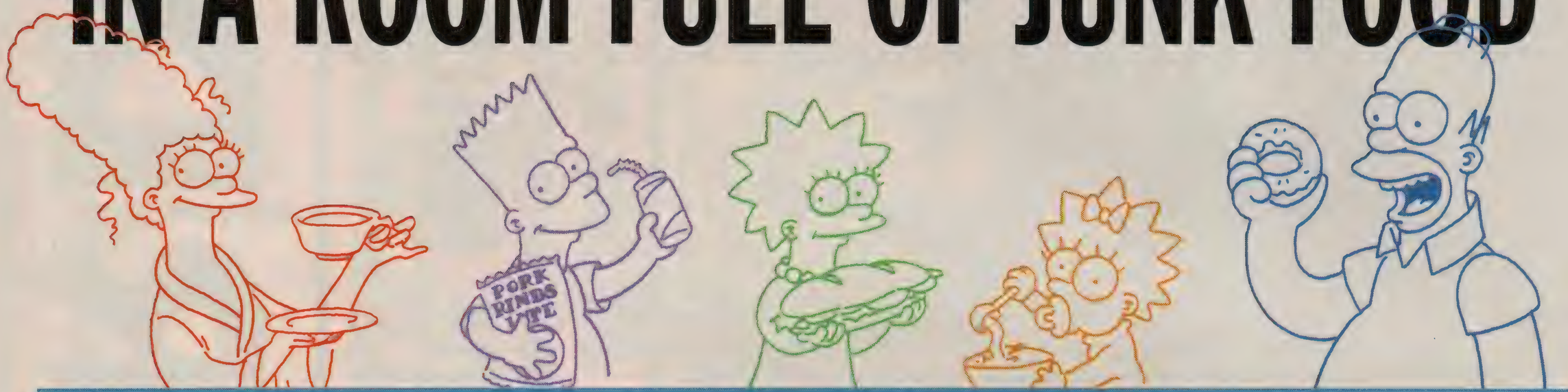
TRAPPED!

IN A ROOM FULL OF JUNK FOOD



A Conversation with the writers of *The Simpsons*

By Jeffrey Book

Despite its name, the New Writers Building on the Twentieth Century Fox lot looks as if it were built during World War II—when quality construction materials were in short supply. Upstairs, *The Simpsons* writers are lounging in their rumpus room, around a coffee table littered with empty cartons of Chinese take-out food and bags of cookies and chips. (What, no pork rinds?)

But don't be fooled—comedy is hard work. The show is written by twelve seriously funny people—Al Jean, Jay Kogen, Jeff Martin, George Meyer, Mike Reiss, David Stern, John Swartzwelder, Jon Vitti and Wallace Wolodarsky—with input from executive producers James L. Brooks, Sam Simon, and *Simpsons* creator Matt Groening. The guys are veterans of shows ranging from *Saturday Night Live* and *Late Night with David Letterman* to *Alf* and *The Tracey Ullman Show*. Five of them did time on the *Harvard Lampoon*.

The banter in the writers' burrow never stops.

Wolodarsky: "It's a really good staff, very solid."

Reiss: "All it takes is one guy with a bad attitude to drag down the bunch. We don't have that problem."

Jean: "Good thing they signed us up to lengthy contracts that can't be broken."

Wolodarsky: "We have to wear these electronic probation bracelets."

Kogen: "We hate each other's guts but we can't say anything about it now."

Good humor makes it easier to deal with the relentless schedule. Production for each season runs more than a year, so writers can find themselves working on episodes from two seasons at once. The time from conception of a story to broadcast is six months or more. (Writers of live-action series finish a script, on the other hand, see it filmed, and move on.) Animation production

PHOTOS BY TED SOQUI

has more stages, requiring *The Simpsons* writers to be involved throughout a long process of fine-tuning.

Most *Simpsons* shows originate at the writers' and producers' twice-a-year hotel conferences. "Everyone comes in with all the story ideas they have to pitch, and we see which ones are good enough to be shows," explains Jean.

"In the course of eight hours, we'll get eight or ten stories that we'll use—about half a season's worth," adds Wolodarsky. This also lets Brooks, Groening, and Simon help shape the stories at the outset; later they can react to scripts in progress.

Working alone or in pairs, the writers come back and flesh out the successful ideas. Often they'll have other story meetings with supervising producers Jean, Reiss, and other writers to correct any problems. Once the story is strong enough, the writers get the go-ahead to expand it into a detailed outline, perhaps 20 or 25 pages long, including a lot of dialogue and scene description.

"They bring the outline in and we go over it, looking for things that don't work, changing things around," says Jean. "Then they go off to write the script. The first draft is rewritten by the whole staff—that usually takes two or three days. We try to add some really good jokes and make sure the story works as well as possible. So every script ends up with something in it from almost everybody in the room."

On Thursday morning, the rewritten script is read by the cast, while the rest of the production staff looks on. "By the reaction of everyone there, you can kind of tell what material is working and what isn't," Jean says. "Then we rewrite that script over the next day and a half, and that becomes what's recorded on the following Monday—just the audio track. But it still can change a lot. We change lines on Monday while we're recording, we change material when the animation comes back in a rough black-and-white version called the animatic, we even change it after it comes back in color form from Korea."

"Luckily, we can alter dialogue so that it still fits the animation," Reiss says. "A lot of stuff can be done in video editing to maintain the lip sync."

"So we're always adding new lines or cutting things that don't work," Jean says, "right up until a show airs. We've changed things on Tuesday in an episode that aired on Thursday. The whole process is continuous. We're always working on four episodes at once, in various stages of development."

"There are things in the scripts that surprise us both ways," Martin says, "things you'd swear are gold and get no response, other things that you can't believe get a laugh."

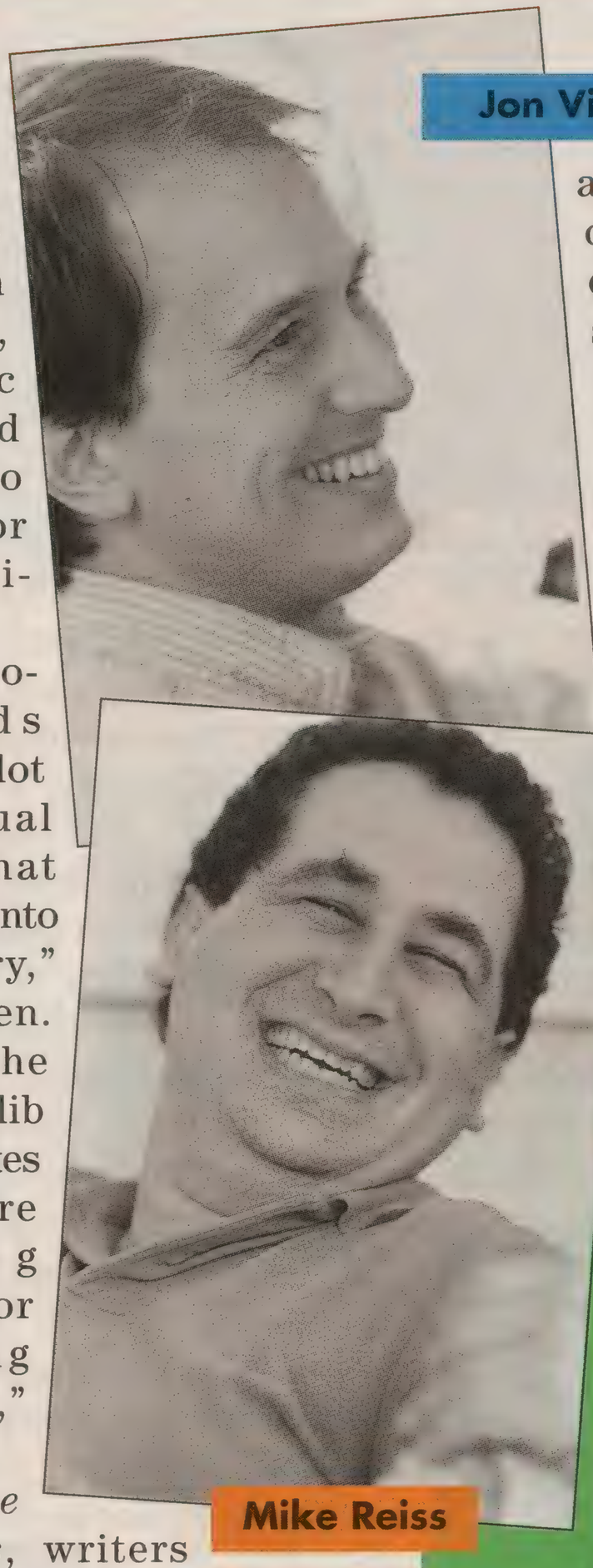
"By the time a show gets on the air, we've all heard the same jokes dozens of times, so one of the things we have to do is remember what the reaction was the first time," Groening says. "It's one of the reasons I think the show holds up to repeated viewings, because the jokes that stay in are the jokes we didn't get tired of."

The writers also must

Writer's Bloc: (Back row, L to R) Jon Vitti, Al Jean, Mike Reiss, Jeff Martin, Wallace Wolodarsky; (Front row, L to R) George Meyer, John Swartzwelder, Jay Kogen, Matt Groening.

respond to the storyboards created by the animation directors, the music score, and the audio track for their episodes.

"The storyboards provide a lot of visual jokes that feed back into the story," says Kogen. "And the actors ad lib a lot of jokes as they're reading through or recording the show," Reiss adds.



Jon Vitti

Mike Reiss

On *The Simpsons*, writers produce and producers write. The distinction is a fuzzy one. Jean explains: "Generally people who've been working on the show a little longer have a producer credit. This season everybody's a producer."

"I'm not," snaps Martin. "Phony-baloney producer credits. They mean little. It's the story editor who matters." (Martin is executive story editor.)

While most half-hour TV shows follow a two-act structure, with a brief lead-in or closing bit, *The Simpsons* is a three-act show. "We usually introduce a problem in the first act, elaborate on it in the second, and resolve it in the third," Meyer says. "We usually have a little bit of a cliffhanger at the end of the acts, and we try to end the show with something clever—"

"You're giving it all away!" Reiss interrupts.

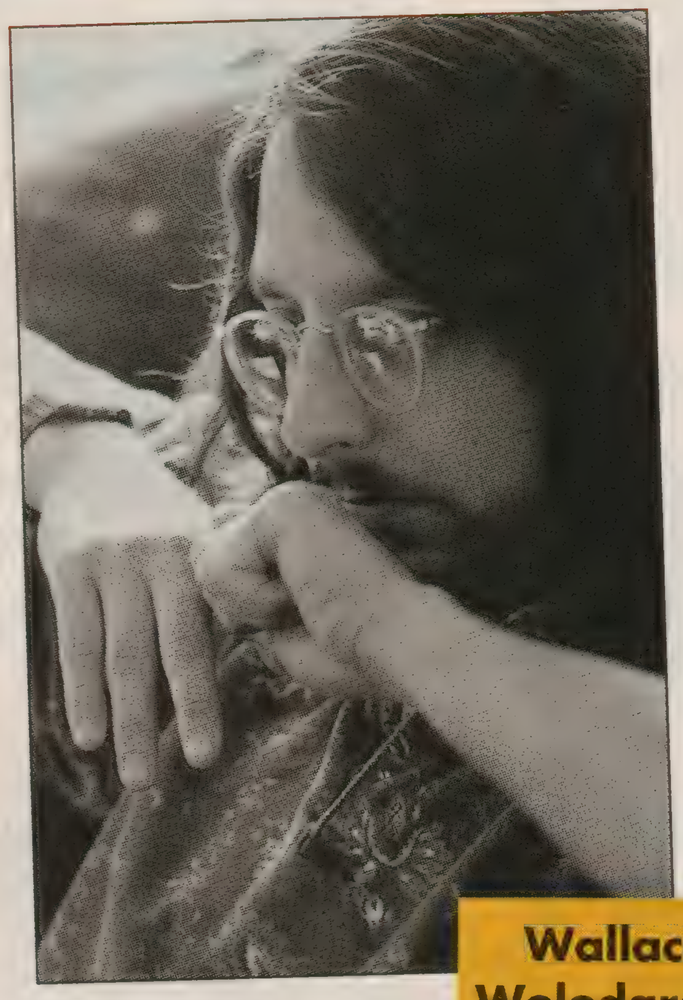
"Now everyone will be able to do it!" Wolodarsky says.

But Meyer continues: "For example, the cable TV story that ends with Homer cutting the cable and the screen going to static."

"With three acts we can do two stories in one show, where the first-act story is almost unrelated to the main story, but introduces it," says Jean.

"We've never once said, 'We shouldn't put this in because kids won't understand it.'"

Martin adds, "The first act may be five minutes of free jokes and one thing that sets the plot in motion—like the show that started with the Simpsons going to a water park in the first act, which ended with Homer stuck in a pipe and having to go on a diet. Then we didn't see the water park again."



Wallace Wolodarsky

"We'll set up a story in the first act that might be enough for an entire episode of another series," Meyer says. "It will be resolved in the first act and we'll go on—it helps keep the show interesting."

"We cram so much into each show," says Martin. "Each script is half again as long as standard sitcom scripts because we don't have a laugh track, and the pace is extremely fast."

The show is dense with allusions to movies, music, art, and, of course, television. "We've never once said, 'We shouldn't put this in because kids won't understand it,'" notes Jean. And we try not to get

Al Jean

preachy, even though characters are usually punished if they do something wrong. You always want to be funny, and you want to be true to your characters. If you have too many rules, it can stifle creativity.

"It's very hard to produce animation. The quality of *The Simpsons*, every week, is a tribute to the animation directors and the storyboard artists."

George Meyer

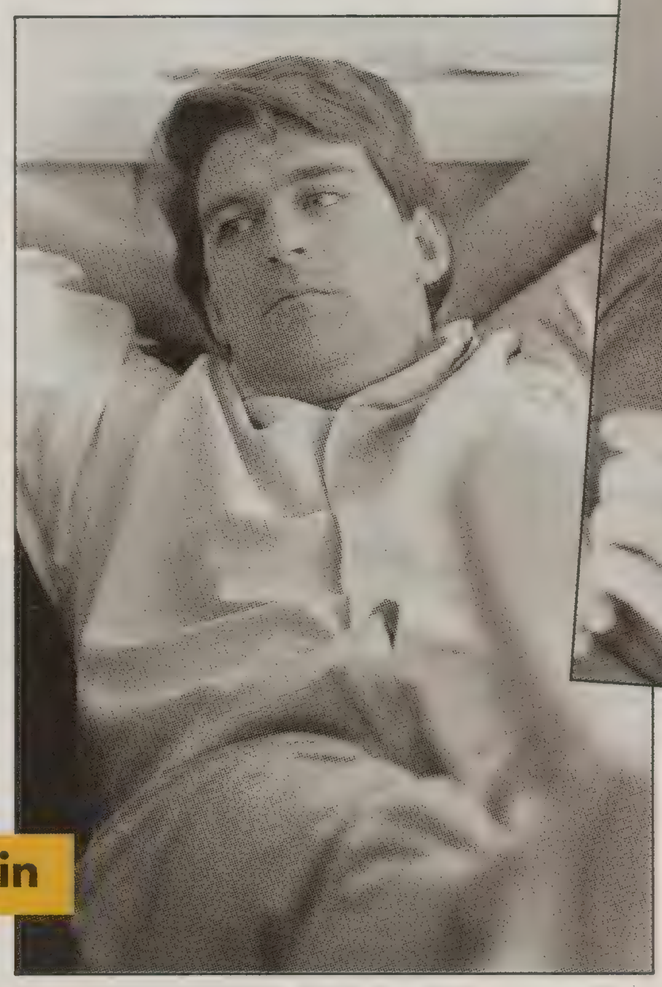
The writers like the freedom that animation offers. Martin says, "Doing *The Simpsons* is a very special opportunity to go wild with the writing, to not be bound by the constraints of a three-camera show, where people say, 'We can't do this scene—do you know what it would cost to build this set?' If we want the Simpsons to go to the opera for ten seconds, it's no problem."

Jean cites another advantage: "In live-action shows, if you have a child actor and the show lasts ten years, the actor will turn into a hideous-looking adult, and you have to keep adapting to that. Bart can always be ten years old and Lisa can always be eight. We're striving for a timelessness, so you could mix a show from the latest season with one from the first."

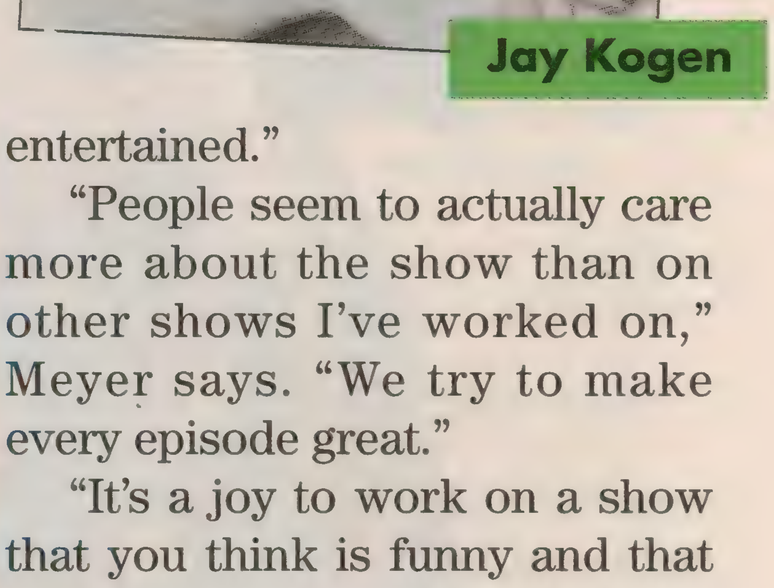
Wolodarsky adds, "It's like some sort of existential nightmare where you just keep repeating your tenth birthday."

Reflecting on other things that make writing for *The Simpsons* different, Swartzwelder says, "It's a writer's show—it's radio with pictures. You could close your eyes and just listen and still be entertained."

"It's a writer's show—it's radio with pictures. You could close your eyes and just listen and still be entertained."



Jeff Martin

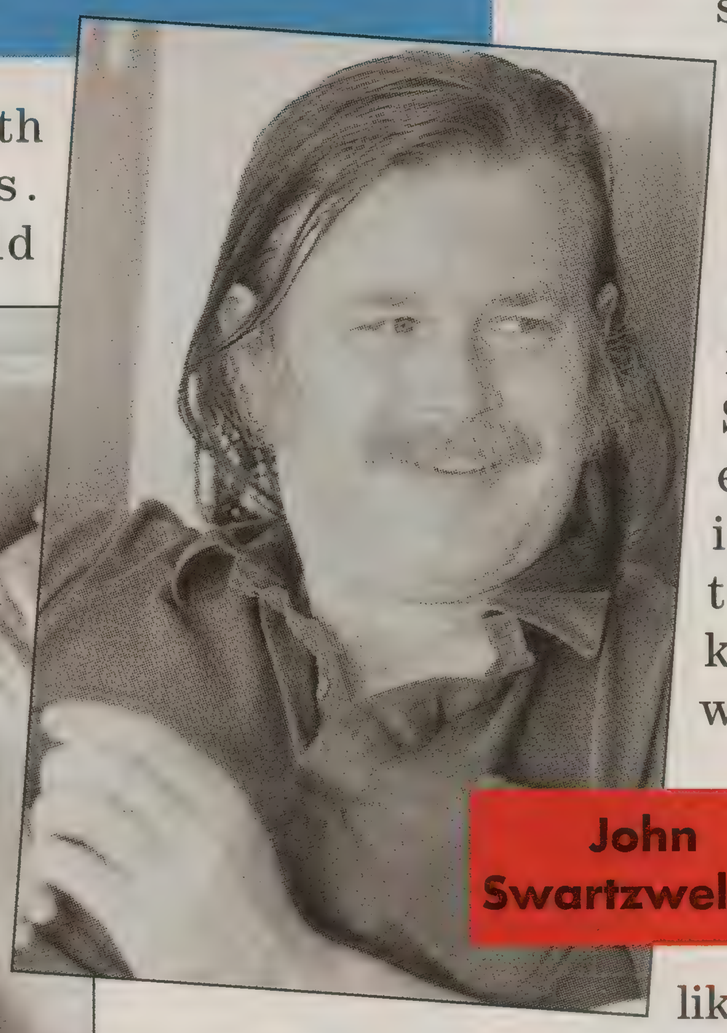


Jay Kogen

"People seem to actually care more about the show than on other shows I've worked on," Meyer says. "We try to make every episode great."

"It's a joy to work on a show that you think is funny and that matches your sensibility," Wolodarsky adds.

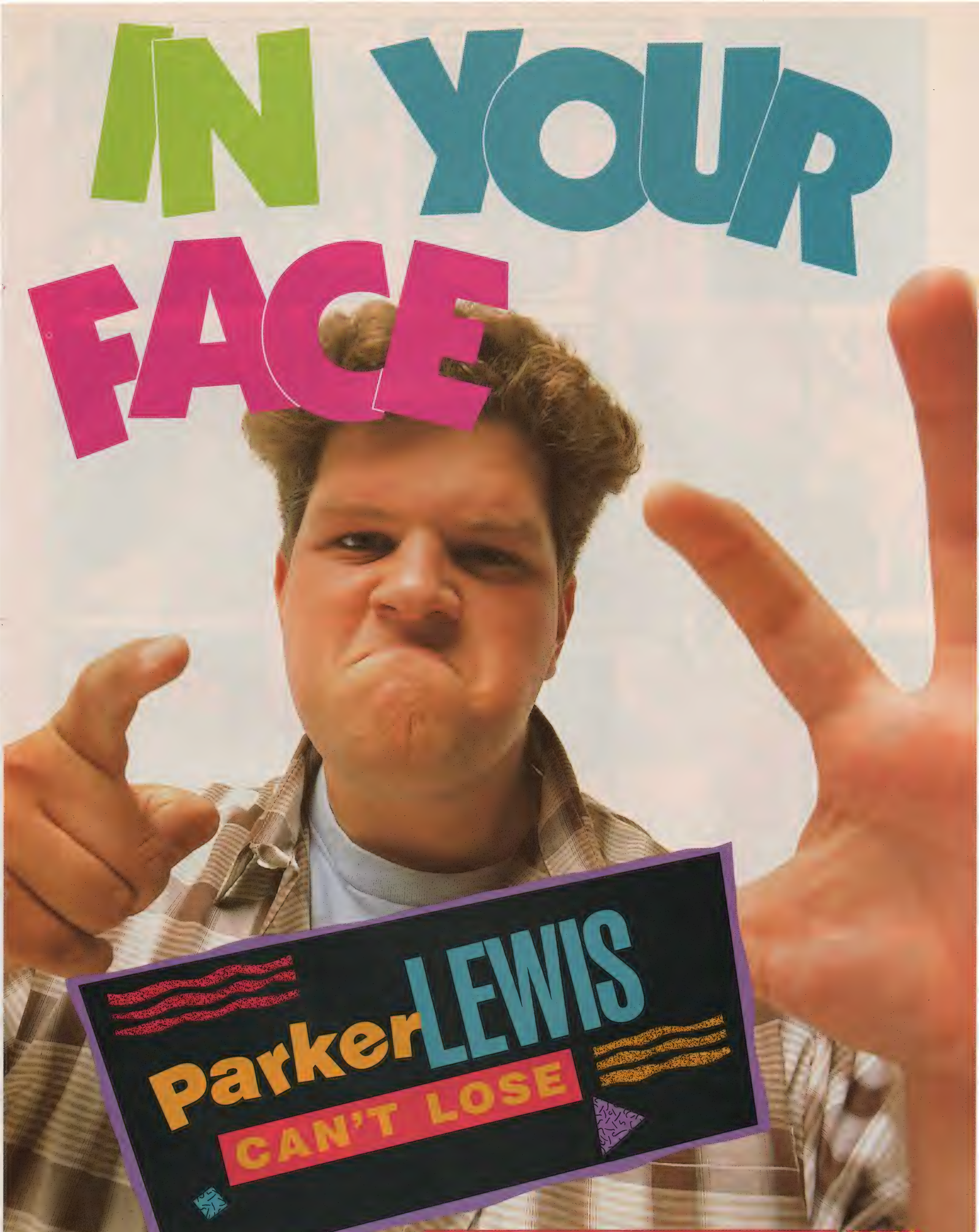
With more than fifty episodes in the can, the writers are far from running out of ideas. "The show has settled into a groove," notes Meyer. "We've developed and fleshed out a body of more than forty characters that we can rely on for any situation." And Springfield's reality is elastic enough to include just about anything. The Simpsons know no bounds. (The writers have already sent Bart to France, outer space, and hell.) "We go through material like termites," Martin says, "but our scope is very broad. You can bet we'll keep coming up with good shows."



John Swartzwelder

FAMILY

IN YOUR FACE



Sundays 7:30/6:30PM Central & Mountain

FOX

MATT GROENING'S

THE SIMPSONS IN "LOUSED WEEKEND"

GOOD NEWS, EVERYONE! MY MOTHER IS GOING TO STAY WITH US FOR A FEW DAYS WHILE HER HOUSE IS BEING FUMIGATED.

BUT MARGE, IT'S THE WEEKEND. AND OUR WEEKENDS AREN'T THAT GREAT TO BEGIN WITH.

NOW HOMER, MOM'S BEEN A LITTLE DOWN IN THE DUMPS THESE PAST FEW...UH, YEARS. THIS WILL BE A GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR US TO CHEER HER UP.

HEY LISA, WHAT'S THAT GURGLING SOUND? OH, IT MUST BE DAD'S WEEKEND GOING DOWN THE TOILET!

IF YOU KIDS THINK YOU'RE GOING TO SQUIRM OUT OF THIS YOU'VE GOT ANOTHER THING COMING!

HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA

WE'VE ALL GOT TO PITCH IN AND MAKE GRANDMA BOUVIER FEEL WELCOME AND LOVED.

OH, MAN! FIRST THEY TAKE THE FLASH OFF THE AIR, AND NOW THIS! HOW MUCH TRAUMA CAN A TEN-YEAR-OLD STAND?

THE NEXT DAY. . .

I JUST WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT I NEVER WOULD HAVE AGREED TO STAY HERE IF THE SNOOZE-N-SAVE BUDGET MOTEL HADN'T BURNED DOWN.

DID I MENTION THAT YOU NEVER DO ANYTHING RIGHT?

HA HA. IT'S SO GOOD TO HAVE YOU HERE, MOM!

MAKE YOURSELF COMFORTABLE. I'LL GO AND FIND HOMER. HE JUST CAN'T WAIT TO SEE YOU.

HOMER! WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING?

D'OH! JUST SECONDS AWAY FROM A CLEAN BREAK!

DON'T EXPECT ME TO TALK TO YOU. I HAVE LARYNGITIS.

THAT'S NICE! I MEAN...UH, TOO BAD!

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AT THE RISK OF LOSING MY VOICE, LET ME JUST SAY ONE THING. I CURSE THE DAY YOU FIRST SPOKE TO MY DAUGHTER.

WHY YOU SHRIVELLED UP, CRANKY OLD. . .

HA, HA. GOOD ONE, MOM.

LISA, YOU GOTTA HELP ME! MOM WANTS ME TO SPEND SOME QUALITY TIME WITH GRANDMA. WHAT DO I DO?

JUST GO WITH WHAT YOU KNOW. ASK HER TO PLAY A VIDEO GAME WITH YOU.

BUT I'D AVOID "ESCAPE FROM GRANDMA'S HOUSE" IF I WERE YOU.

UH. . . HI GRANDMA. WANT TO PLAY "SPACE MUTANTS" WITH ME?

THOSE GAMES WILL ROT YOUR BRAIN. PARCHEESI, NOW THAT WAS A WHOLESOME GAME. PLEASE LEAVE ME ALONE NOW. GRANDMA'S VERY TIRED.

AM I PARANOID OR DID I JUST GET BRUSHED OFF BY MY OWN GRANDMOTHER?

I KNOW YOU'RE USED TO HAVING IT THE OTHER WAY AROUND, BUT DON'T FEEL BAD. YOU TOOK YOUR BEST SHOT. NOW IT'S UP TO THE WOMEN--RIGHT MAGGIE?

SUCK, SUCK.

MAGGIE AND I WANT YOU TO KNOW HOW MUCH WE ADMIRE YOU, GRANDMA.

YOU RAISED THREE DAUGHTERS DURING THE TURBULENT SIXTIES. . .

YOU LOST GRANDPA BOUVIER IN A FREAK ROLLER COASTER ACCIDENT. . .

YOURS HAS NOT BEEN AN EASY LIFE, AND YET YOU MUSTER UP THE ENERGY TO VISIT YOUR FAMILY ON MOST OF THE MEAL-ORIENTED RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS.

WE LOVE YOU, AND WE WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT. . . GRANDMA? GRANDMA?

Z Z Z Z Z Z Z

SATURDAY, 8:15 PM

OKAY, SO HAVING MOM OVER WASN'T SUCH A GREAT IDEA.

I'M A TERRIBLE GRANDCHILD. I COULDN'T EVEN GET HER TO SMILE.

IS IT OVER YET?

I CAN'T BELIEVE I'M PRAYING FOR MONDAY MORNING TO COME.

I'M LEAVING. THE FUMIGATORS ARE FINISHED EARLY. I JUST WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT I'M SORRY I CAME.

BYE MOM! WE LOVE YOU! COME AGAIN SOON!

DITTO!

TYPICAL. THEY ALWAYS WAIT UNTIL I'M LEAVING TO SHOW ANY KIND OF AFFECTION.

MATT GROENING

END

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JTMG

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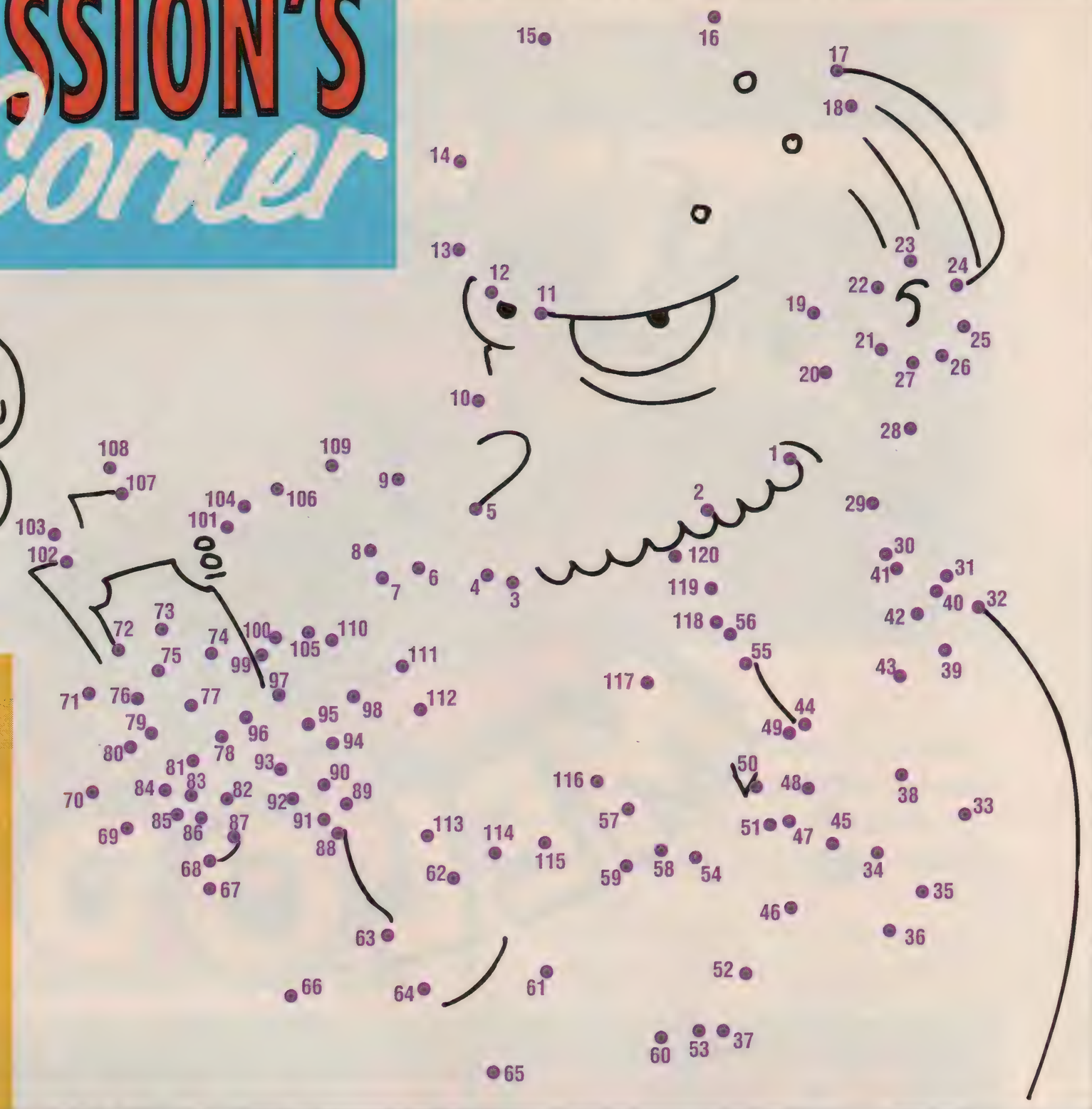
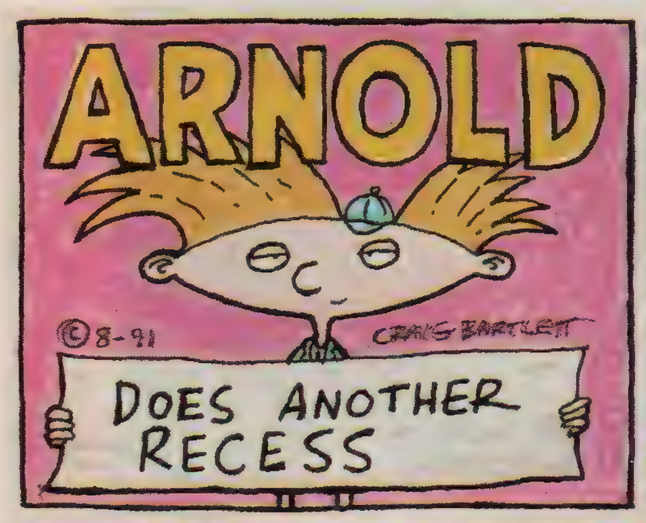
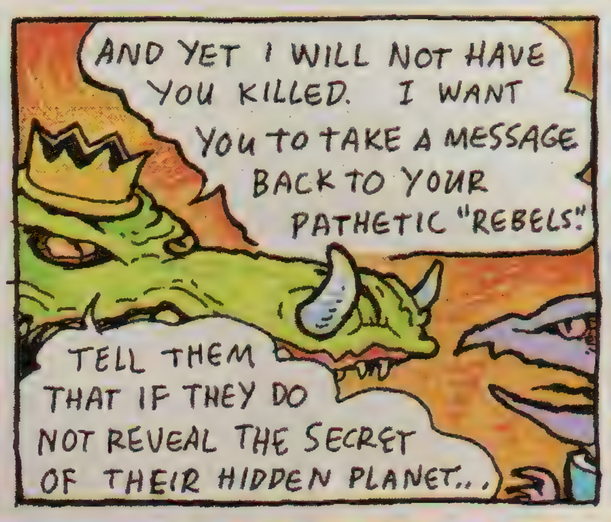
SMILIN' JOE FISSION'S *Fun Corner*

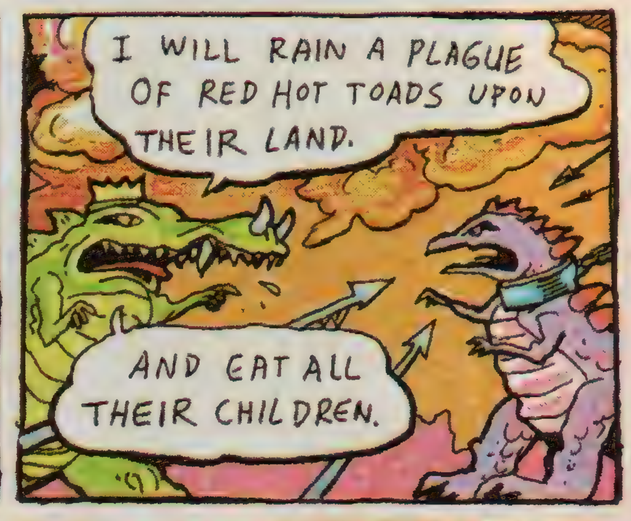
HERE IN SPRINGFIELD THE MANY BLESSINGS OF NUCLEAR POWER ARE AVAILABLE TO ALL, NO MATTER HOW LOWLY THEIR SOCIAL STATUS. BUT DO YOU KNOW WHO THE BIGGEST BENEFICIARY IS? CONNECT THE DOTS AND FIND OUT!

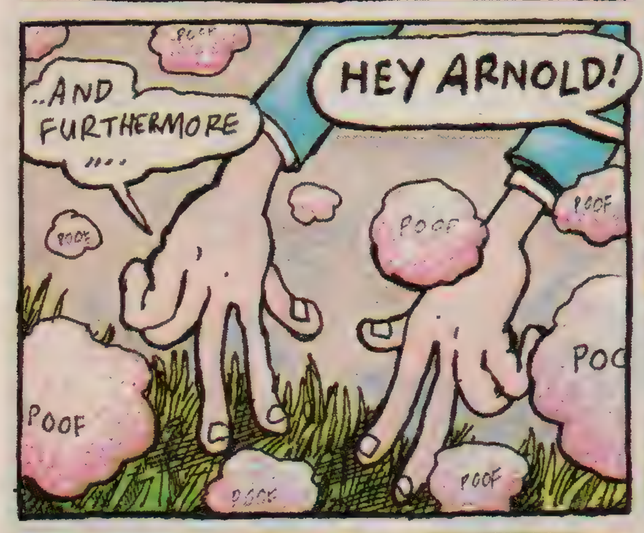


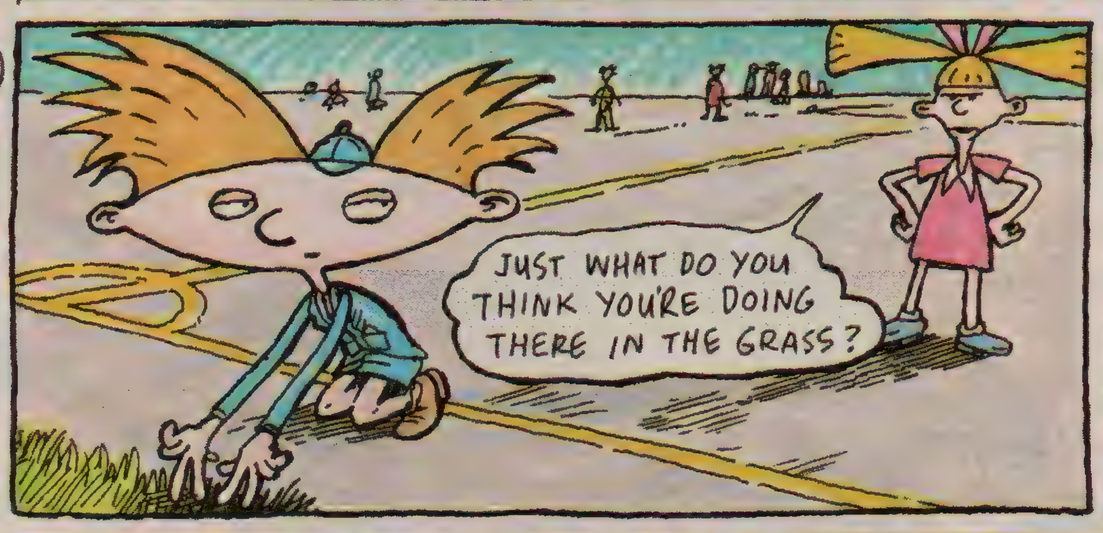
Brought to you by The Springfield Nuclear Power Plant "Springfield's biggest employer—and don't you forget it!"

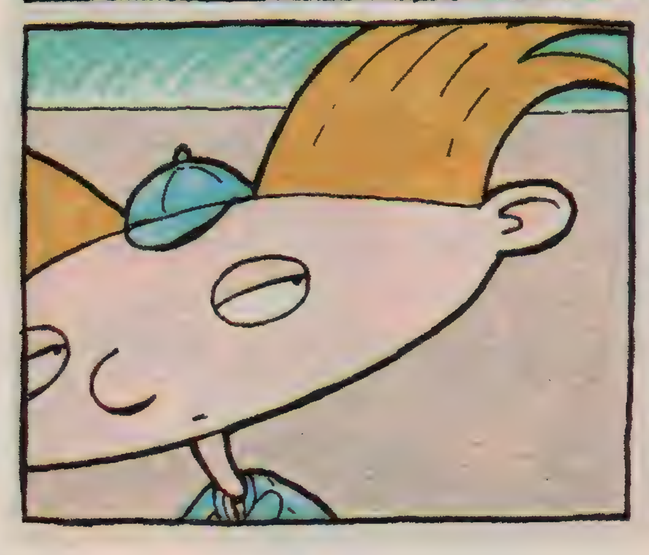


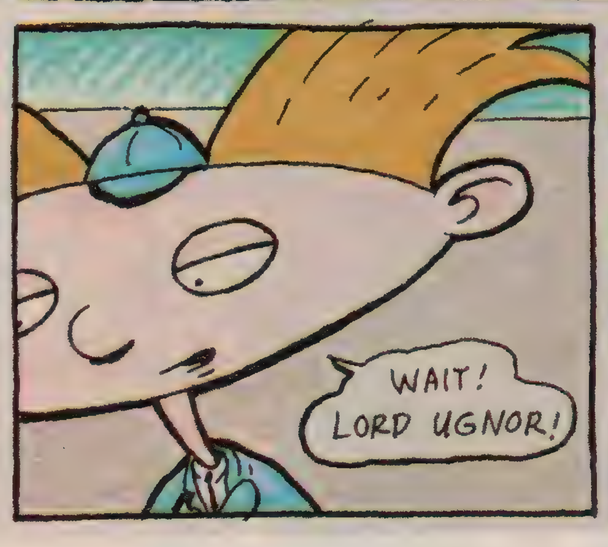

AND YET I WILL NOT HAVE YOU KILLED. I WANT YOU TO TAKE A MESSAGE BACK TO YOUR PATHETIC "REBELS!"
TELL THEM THAT IF THEY DO NOT REVEAL THE SECRET OF THEIR HIDDEN PLANET...

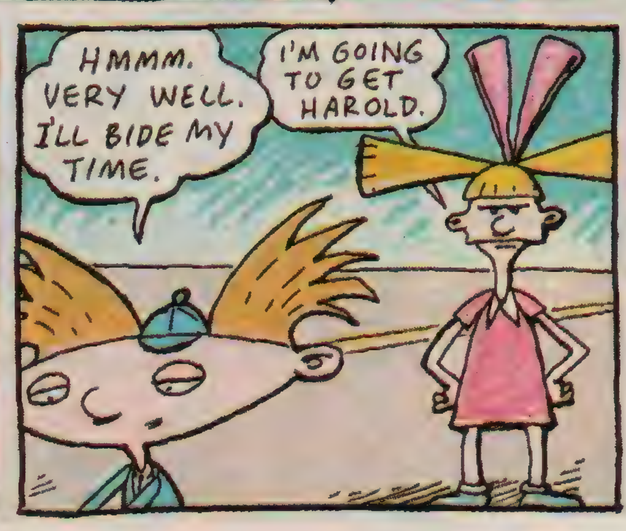












MUTANT MELODIES

SHOW AND TELL

(to the tune of "Jingle Bells")

Show and Tell! Show and Tell!
Objects on display.
Oh, how dull it is to see
your Grandpa's old toupee-ee!

Show and Tell! Show and Tell!
Ashtrays made of clay.
A rusty crank from a broken bank
and a fat pet cat named Ray.

One day Nelson Muntz
brought in a bee hive,
opened it to find
the bees were still alive! (Ow, ow, ow!)

Spoiled Martin Prince
showed off his Monet.
When it slipped and ripped in two
he cried and ran away!

Oh...
Show and Tell! Show and Tell!
(etc., repeat ad nauseum)

We Have No School Today

(to the tune of "Ta-Ra-Ra-Boom-Der-E")

We have no school today! It is some holiday!
I don't know which, per se. But who cares, anyway?!

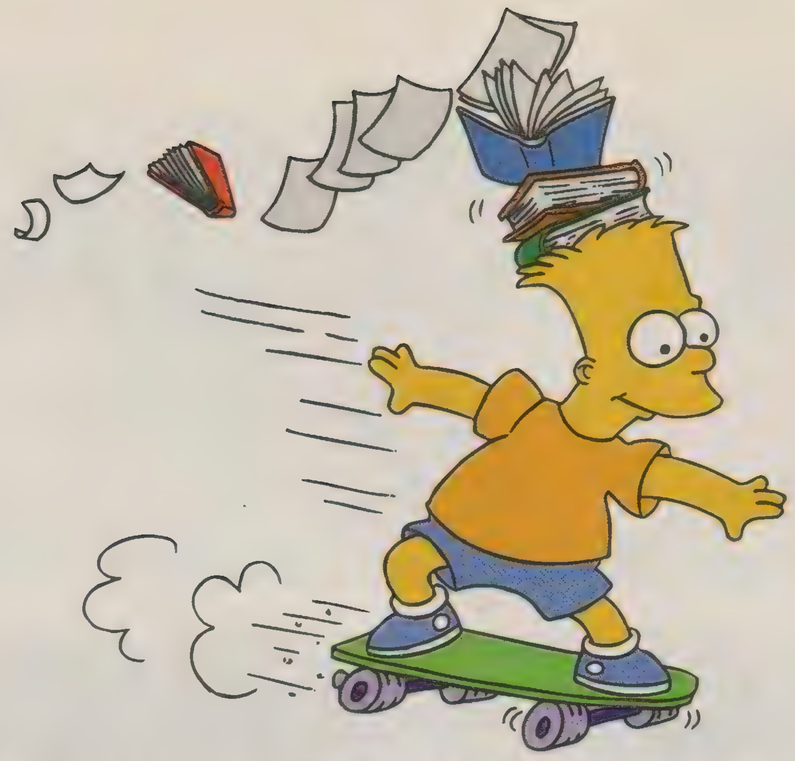
THE SUPER-STRETCH WAISTBAND

(to the tune of "The Star-Spangled Banner")

Oh, say, can you see,
through the trees over there,
what so proudly we pulled
up the flagpole last Friday,
from the locker-room grabbed,
leaving someone's butt bare,
when we fed the flag rope
through the brand name tag sideways?

Up there blowing around,
a stretch waistband its crown,
you would think that by now,
they'd have taken it down.

Oh, say, does that underwear
still flap in the breeze,
o'er the classrooms, the schoolyard,
the parking lot and the trees?!



I'VE BEEN WORKING ON MY HOMEWORK

(to the tune of "I've Been Working on the Railroad")

I've been working on my homework
While I watch TV.
I've been working on my homework
While I skateboard down the street.
Can't you hear the teacher calling,
"Your book report is due!"
"Here it is," I calmly answer,
"All in one sentence, too."

"Here's my book report,
Here's my book report,
Here' my book report for you-ou-ou.
Here's my book report,
Here's my book report,
All in one sentence, too."

THE BATTLE HYMN OF THE BLACKBOARD

(to the tune of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic")

My hands were on the gradebook
where the students' marks are stored.
The teacher burst upon the scene.
"Put down that book!" she roared.
Now I'm writing out these words
one hundred times on the blackboard:
"I will not steal gradebooks."

Man, this task is disconcertin'
Ow, my writing hand is hurtin'
There is one thing that is certain:
I will not steal gradebooks.

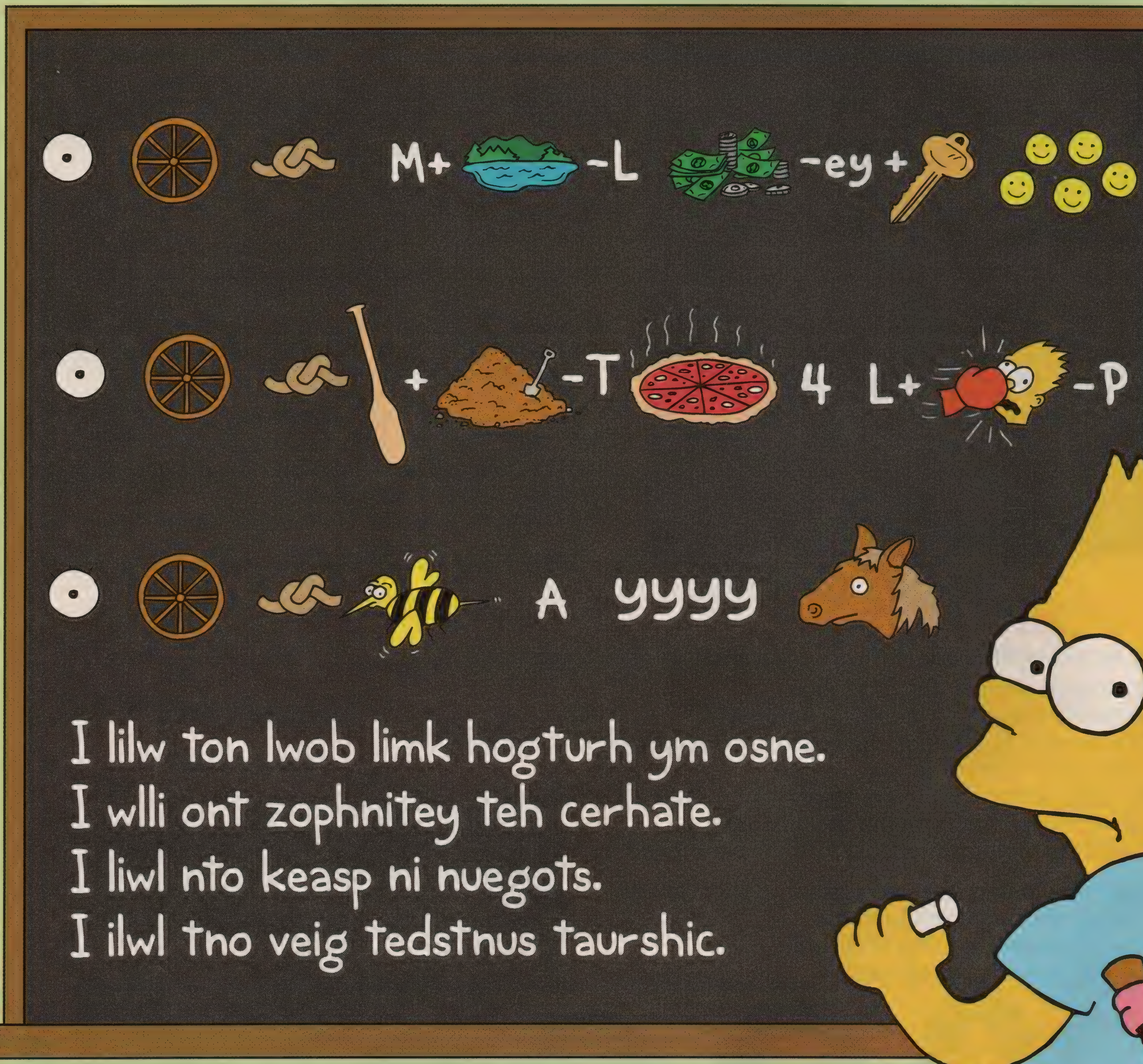
Annoy, Annoy, Annoy Your Teacher

(to the tune of "Row, Row, Row Your Boat")

Annoy, annoy, annoy your teacher
By yelling her first name.
Emily! Emily! Emily! Emily!
You'll drive her insane.

BLACKBOARD JUMBLE

Spending afternoons writing useless sentences at the blackboard isn't Bart's idea of fun.
But he's come up with a way to amuse himself and befuddle his teacher...writing rebus-style.
See if you can unravel his detention inventions for yourself.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+ -T 4 L+ -P
A yyyy
I lilw ton lwob limk hogturh ym osne.
I wlli ont zophnitey teh cerhate.
I liwl nto keasp ni nuegots.
I ilwl tno veig tedstnus taurshic.

ANSWERS: 1) I will not make monkey faces. 2) I will not order pizza for lunch. 3) I will not be a wise ass. 4) I will not blow milk through my nose. 5) I will not hypnotize the teacher. 6) I will not speak in tongues. 7) I will not give students haircuts.

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Pullable

HEY KIDS! FEELING CREATIVE AND REBELLIOUS? TAKE THE ADVICE OF YOURS TRULY. PULL A FEW INNOCENT PRANKS! THEY'RE EDUCATIONAL AND I PROMISE YOU WON'T GO TO JAIL! SEE YOU IN 70 YEARS!

Spook the teacher: Plan ahead of time with your classmates that everybody will scratch a lot during class. You can also randomly look up at the ceiling with a disturbed look on your faces. And there is always the old reliable "Syncronized Pencil Drop" that's annoyed teachers forever.

WRITE A REALLY BAD POEM AND SIGN SOMEONE ELSE'S NAME TO IT. TAPE IT UP IN THE CAFETERIA OR SOME OTHER PUBLIC PLACE.

Hide all the chalk from the black-board before the teacher comes in.

STICK COINS TO THE SIDEWALK. FRIVOLITY ENSUES.

TAPE A $5 BILL ON AN INVISIBLE THREAD AND WATCH AS PEOPLE TRY TO GRAB IT AS YOU PULL IT AWAY.

PASS A NOTE YOU KNOW WILL BE INTERCEPTED BY THE TEACHER. THE NOTE SAYS "ISN'T LEARNING A WONDERFUL THING?"

Announce on a crowded bus that you have just lost your pet tarantula.

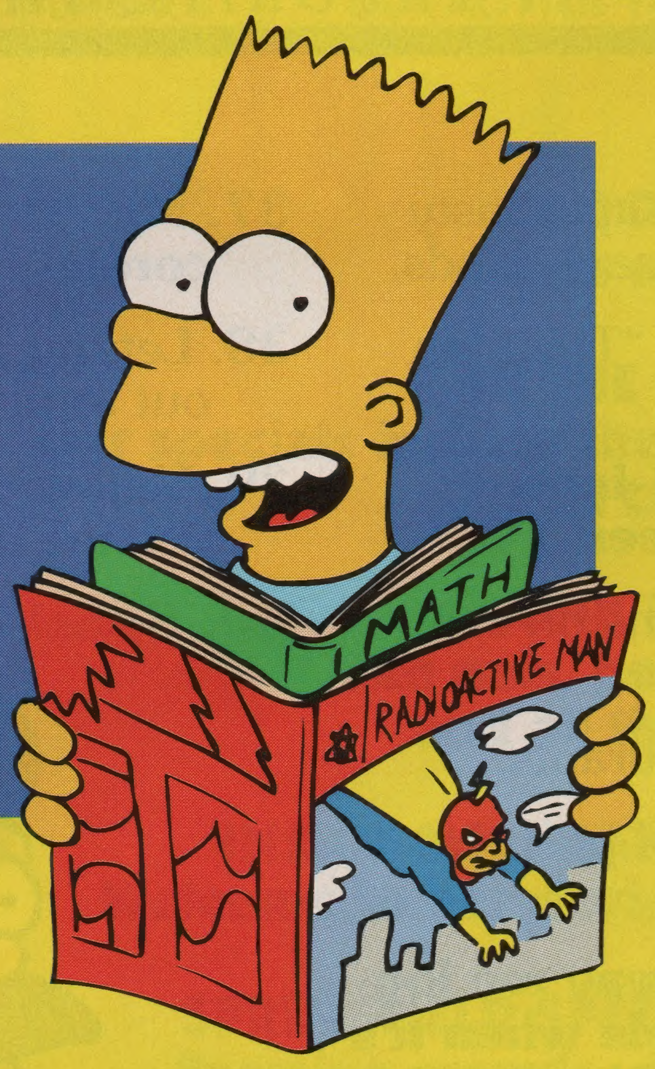
XEROX YOUR BUTT AND START A CHAIN LETTER. MAIL IT TO TEN FRIENDS AND TELL THEM TO XEROX THEIR BUTTS AND MAIL THOSE, ETC.

HAND IN A BLANK SHEET OF PAPER FOR YOUR NEXT BOOK REPORT AND CLAIM IT WAS WRITTEN IN INVISIBLE INK.
(Have the real one handy in case the teacher doesn't fall for it.)

TAPE NICE NOTES TO PEOPLE'S BACKS.

PRANKS

HIDE A TEXTBOOK INSIDE A COMIC BOOK. IT WILL CONFUSE THE TEACHER WHEN SHE COMES TO INVESTIGATES AND SEES YOU DOING YOUR HOMEWORK



Write on the blackboard before class begins: (Teacher's name here) can't help the way he/she is. Please let's try to be really nice to him/her today. Signed The Principal.

PASTE PICTURES OF EYES ON YOUR GLASSES OR USE YOUR MOM'S MAKEUP TO PAINT EYES ON YOUR EYELIDS.

SUBSTITUTE SALT FOR SUGAR IN THE SUGAR BOWL AND WATCH PEOPLE'S FACES!

Mix red & green food coloring in water to make black ice cubes.

CALL YOUR WORST ENEMY AND TELL THEM YOU'VE UNDERGONE A SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION AND YOU LOVE THEM. THEY WILL BE BAFFLED.

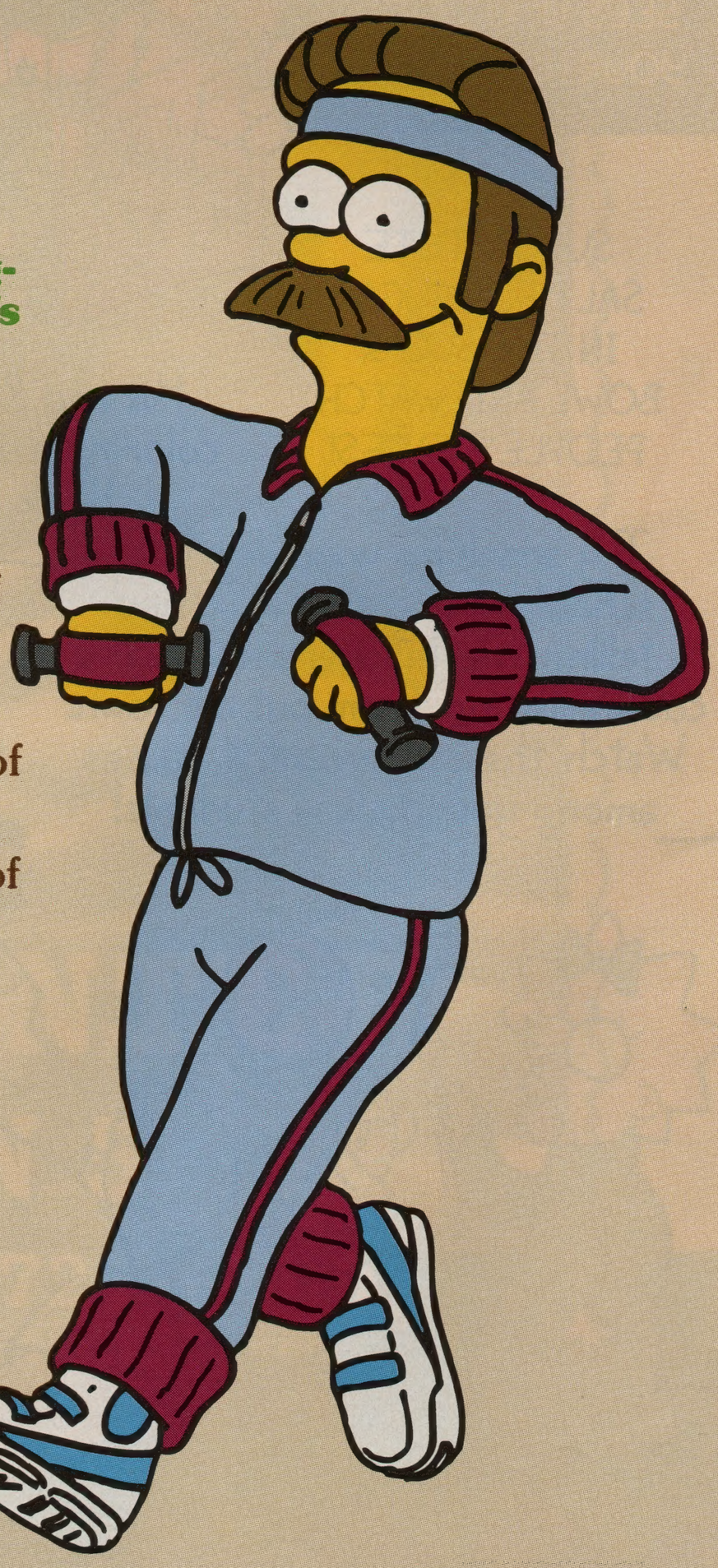
Try sneaking your dog into school by dressing it up and telling the teachers it's your cousin visiting from out of town. Watch the excitement it causes among your fellow students!

Decorate a sleeping family member. (This requires some dexterity and nerves of steel, but it's possible.) Try using makeup, glitter, ribbons, and bits of wadded-up, wet paper. Avoid blocking any breathing passages & eyes!

NED FLANDERS' TOP FORTY

"THESE ARE A FEW OF MY FAVORITE THINGS"

1. Family togetherness nights.
2. My "better half"...."the ol' ball 'n' chain. (Hee hee, just kiddin', Maude!)
3. Yellow ribbons on oak trees.
4. My new 4-wheel drive sport-utility tractor-mower.
5. **Bob Hope specials.**
6. Pants with just a skosh more room in the seat and thighs.
7. The impassioned rhetoric of Reverend Lovejoy.
8. Halogen lighting.
9. Stick-to-itiveness.
10. My new AudioCratic 48-disc CD player with fully uncontrollable no-access random play.
11. Yellow ribbons on flagpoles.
12. **Natural law.**
13. Waiters who introduce themselves.
14. The Ice Capades.
15. The heady mixture of politics and religion.
16. **Florence Henderson.**
17. Cordless power tools.
18. Traditional American Family Values.
19. Feelin' groovy.
20. Those new, super-tasty low-sodium snack foods.
21. Talking with "The Man Upstairs."
22. **My new 64-inch drive-in screen TV.**
23. Yellow ribbons on car antennas.
24. Theme restaurants.
25. The power of positive thinking.
26. **That cozy way my jogging suit feels when it's fresh out of the dryer.**
27. Quality time with Todd and Rod.
28. My new HeartAttacker-2000 deluxe StepMeister exerciser.
29. Dinner theatre.
30. The simple satisfaction of a job well done.
31. The jazzy song stylings of La Streisand.
32. **Made-for-TV movies.**
33. Maude's meatloaf.
34. Good ol' American know-how.
35. War movies with dance music soundtracks.
36. *Reader's Digest's* "Life in These United States."
37. **My new WeedBeater cordless Weasel-Wacker.**
38. Letting my inner-child out to play.
39. Yellow ribbons on high-voltage utility poles.
40. **Spunk.**



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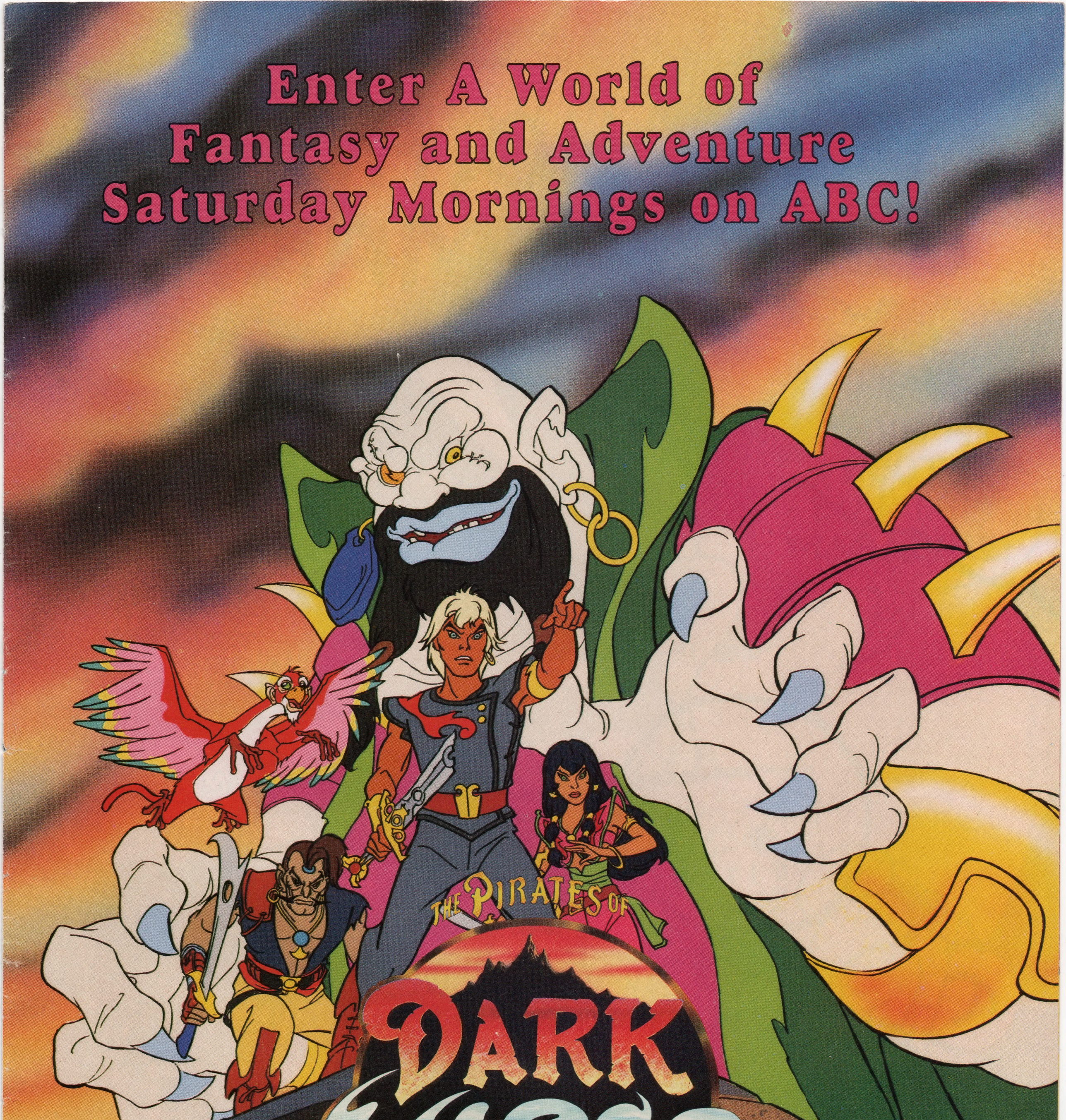

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